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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Laci Peterson trial: Jurors in the Scott Peterson murder trial were sent home Wednesday with orders to return Monday for closing arguments after prosecutors and defense attorneys decided against calling additional witnesses.

Prosecutors had said they planned to call eight witnesses after Peterson's lawyers ended their case Tuesday. But when jurors returned Wednesday afternoon, Judge Alfred A. Detuchi said both sides had decided against having additional testimony in the five-month-long case.

Clinton's health: Former President Clinton may be out on the campaign trail, but he says he feels a bit detached "from the to and fro of the elections."

In an interview with Diane Sawyer on ABC News' "Primetime Live," Clinton also says he prayed for his family before his Sept. 6 heart bypass operation and enjoyed the enforced rest that followed.

He says he suffered no depression after the surgery and didn't mind the recuperation.

Philadelphia corruption probe: Prosecutors won four convictions Wednesday in a case related to a wide-ranging corruption investigation that involved FBI wiretapping of city officials and their political supporters.

Faridah Ali, 54, the director of a Muslim school in Philadelphia, was convicted on charges she conspired to defraud a city community college of about \$224,000 by setting up an adult education program involving nonexistent students and classes.

Ali's two children, Lakisha Spicer, 27, and Aizhen Spicer, 30, were convicted of accepting money to teach courses in the program when they actually performed little work. Eugene D. Weaver III, 30, the son of a Philadelphia Community College administrator, was convicted on the same grounds.

Business

Delta Air Lines woes: Delta Air Lines Inc. took a giant step away from bankruptcy when the pilots union tentatively agreed to a \$1 billion package of contract concessions, including a 32.5 percent wage cut.

The deal was reached Wednesday after 15 months of negotiations that have intensified in recent days, said Karen Miller, spokeswoman for the Air Line Pilots Association. The wage cut becomes effective Dec. 1, and the agreement includes no wage increases for five years. The union rank and file will



Love assault case: Courtney Love leaves Los Angeles County Superior Court Commissioner Sanjay Kumar ordered the singer to stand trial on a felony charge of assault with a deadly weapon after listening to testimony from the alleged victim, Kristin King, and a neighbor in the area of the April 25 incident. "There is uncontroverted evidence that without provocation the defendant threw a bottle at the victim and chased her with a flashlight," Kumar said. Love was ordered to appear for arraignment Nov. 10.

vote on the plan from Monday to Nov. 11.

World

Darfur crisis: Rebel accusations that fresh government air-raids killed 26 civilians in Sudan's troubled Darfur region have cast a pall over peace talks in Nigeria, where African Union mediators trying to end the conflict are making little headway.

Mahgoub Hussain, a spokesman for the rebel Sudan Liberation Army, said Wednesday that the bombings occurred Tuesday and Wednesday in the town of Alaiat, in eastern Darfur. But Lt. Gen. Mohammed Ismail, the deputy chief of staff of the Sudanese army, said there had been no fresh violence in the area.

Bosnia's missing persons: Forensics experts said Wednesday they have generated

DNA profiles from bone samples from more than 10,000 bodies unearthed from mass graves across the former Yugoslavia.

Adnan Rizvic, deputy head of the forensic science department of the International Commission for Missing Persons, said the profiles represent a third of all those still missing after the Balkan wars of the 1990s. The samples are ready to be matched with DNA taken from relatives of the missing.

China asylum policy: China will punish anyone who helps asylum-seekers break into diplomatic missions, an official said Thursday — a day after two South Korean human rights activists were detained along with 65 North Koreans.

Police arrested the two men in a raid in eastern Beijing amid a recent spate of cases of North Koreans breaking into diplomatic facilities. Asylum-seekers have entered the Canadian and South Korean embassies and other missions in attempts to go to South Korea.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhang Qiyue said organizers of such "illegal immigration and breaking into diplomatic missions" will face legal consequences.

Madrid bombings: In the first trial stemming from the train bombings in Madrid, Spain, a prosecutor will seek an eight-year jail term for a Spanish teenager charged with transporting dynamite used in the attacks, court officials said Thursday.

The juvenile-court trial of the 16-year-old is expected to be held behind closed doors next month. The boy's identity is known but Spanish media are barred from publishing it.

A National Court prosecutor announced Wednesday night she will seek eight years in a juvenile detention center for the boy, and after that five years' probation.

Thailand violence: At least two people died and 21 were injured Tuesday when a bomb exploded in a border town in Thailand's troubled Narathiwat province, where about 100 Muslims earlier gathered for the mass burial of 22 unidentified men killed in military custody after a violent protest, officials said.

Police said most of the victims of the explosion appeared to be Malaysian tourists.

The bomb exploded outside a bar in the town of Sungai Kolok on the border with Malaysia, police said. Two men on a motorcycle left the explosive device in a box outside a shop next to the bar, and it exploded as they drove off, police said.

Stories and photo from wire services

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Judge orders military to halt anthrax shots

BY MARC KAUFMAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department must immediately stop inoculating soldiers with anthrax vaccine, a federal judge ruled Wednesday, saying the Food and Drug Administration acted improperly when it approved the experimental injections for general use.

Concluding that the FDA violated its own rules by approving the vaccine late last year, U.S. District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan said the mandatory vaccination program — which has inoculated more than 1.2 million soldiers since 1998 — is “illegal.”

Sullivan wrote that his ban on involuntary vaccination will remain until the FDA reviews the anthrax vaccine properly or until President Bush determines the normal process must be waived due to emergency circumstances.

The Defense Department has required many soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan to be vaccinated and has punished and sometimes court-martialed those who refused. The department expanded its anthrax and smallpox vaccination programs in July to include troops stationed in South Korea and other areas in Asia and Africa, despite complaints from some soldiers that the vaccine made them sick.

In a statement, the Defense Department said it is reviewing the decision and will “pause giving anthrax vaccinations until the legal situation is clarified.” DOD remains convinced that the anthrax immunization program complies with all the legal requirements and that the anthrax vaccine is safe and effective.

In his decision, Sullivan wrote that the FDA’s approval was invalid because it did not meet required review standards and failed to seek the necessary public comment.

“Congress has prohibited the administration of in-

vestigational drugs to servicemen without their consent,” he said. “This Court will not permit the government to circumvent this requirement.”

“The men and women of our armed forces deserve the assurance that the vaccines our government compels them to take into their bodies have been tested by the greatest scrutiny of all — public scrutiny. This is the process the FDA, in its expert judgment has outlined, and this is the course this court shall compel FDA to follow,” Sullivan wrote.

The judge ruled on a suit filed in March 2003 by six servicemen who argued that the FDA never properly reviewed the vaccine for its ability to protect against inhalation anthrax. The suit claimed that the drug was never shown to be effective and that some vaccinated soldiers have experienced extreme fatigue, joint pain and temporary memory loss after being vaccinated.

The vaccine, made by BioPort of Lansing, Mich., is given as a series of several shots.

Marc Zaid, an attorney for the six who has also defended more than a dozen soldiers court-martialed for refusing the vaccine, said one of his clients was a breast-feeding mother who did not think the vaccine was safe for her child.

“We will now initiate an effort to ensure the government reverses all punishments that were imposed for refusing an order to take the vaccine,” Zaid said. He also will seek compensation for soldiers who were physically harmed.

“As we’ve seen in Iraq, there wasn’t any actual threat from anthrax,” Zaid said.

Sullivan initially ruled in late 2003 that the FDA had never approved the vaccine and ordered injunctions to stop. Eight days later, the FDA approved the vaccine based on an application made 18 years earlier, and the inoculation program resumed. Wednesday’s ruling concluded the agency must follow its own rules in deciding the vaccine was safe and effective.



PHOTOS BY GREG TYLER/Stars and Stripes

This youngster in the 2004 Fear Factory at Saseba Naval Base Saturday night is not the sweet child she appears. Saseba’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation department and community volunteers produce the Fear Factory at the Hario Housing Village Gym.

Beware of what lurks at the Fear Factory

BY GREG TYLER
Stars and Stripes

SASEBA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Judging from Wednesday evening’s dress rehearsal, those attending the 2004 Fear Factory at the Hario Housing Village Gym from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday will see evidence that sleepy Saseba has its fair share of deranged weirdos — at least on Halloween weekend.

Visiting the annual haunted house should be a freaky — and at just \$3 per person, frugal — night out, organizers said.

About 70 people — half of them volunteers, and the rest having some connection to Morale, Welfare and Recreation — are creating the mind-boggling adrenaline rush, said event coordinator Efrain Gracia.

“By day, I’m the manager of the Galaxies Club here on base,” Gracia said. “And by night, I transform into everybody’s worst nightmare.”

“For \$3, it’s an awesome bargain, and we even have a ‘Pumpkin Patch’ just for the little kids we don’t allow in the Fear Factory,” he said. “You even get a snack included in your ticket price.”

Not, presumably, from the massive jar full of eyeballs awaiting visitors in one of the rooms. Instead, MWR usually serves hot dogs, candy, popcorn and soft drinks each year to those exiting the haunted house.

“Here in Japan they don’t really do very much in the way of Halloween activities, so to be able to

do something of this magnitude, of this size, is one of the ways we can provide a little bit of what people from the base are accustomed to back home,” Gracia said.

The end of the Fear Factory tour will feature a big finale, although Gracia declined to disclose details. He did say, however, that the chainsaw-wielding goons that enlivened past Fear Factories would be absent this weekend because they “have become passé, really.”

Two major contributions came from volunteers, including a bizarre vortex tunnel created by James Jackson from Saseba’s Bowling Center. The second is a strange “gravity house,” built by the Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, Saseba Detachment.

“This is the first time I’ve been involved in a haunted house. ... I mean, I went through a couple as a kid, but I’ve never been a part of creating one,” said volunteer Petty Officer 2nd Class Neil Dwyer, from Assault Craft Unit One.

“I was listening to the radio when I heard they were looking for volunteers and I thought it might be fun. So I came out here and everybody had a bunch of ideas and it’s turned out great,” he said.

“Some of it actually comes from my demented mind,” he added. “They always give me a hard time when we’re working here. They say, ‘You’re sick. What’s wrong with you?’ It’s all fun though.”

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Kids take their views to the polls

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

MISAWA AIR BASE, Japan — Sollars Elementary School’s fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders went to the polls Thursday and overwhelmingly voted for the incumbent in a mock election. President Bush garnered 243 votes, with Sen. John Kerry mustering just 70. Independent candidate Ralph Nader tallied a lackluster 13.

The school’s votes will be counted as part of National Mock Election Day, when millions of students across the United States, as well as U.S. students living elsewhere in the world, get the chance to cast mock ballots in an exercise to promote civic awareness.

Sollars’ gifted-education teacher, Lori Grant, organized the

school’s mock election to get students interested in and excited about voting — so they’ll exercise their right to vote when they turn 18, she said.

Voting gives them a voice, Grant said. “It’s their way of choosing who is going to make the laws for them.”

It was Grant’s first mock election at Sollars, but she also held one in Mississippi in 1988, when the elder George Bush faced off against Democrat Michael Dukakis. In that national mock election, “George Bush Sr. won,” Grant said, “so we kind of wonder if this is a predicting factor.”

Sollars’ fifth-grade social studies teacher Michael Tate said the kids in the national mock election tend to “pick a winner, because

they’re mirroring what’s being said at home.”

But talk to the Sollars students, and some say they don’t even know for whom their parents voted.

“My dad says it’s a secret, that that’s what voting is all about,” said 10-year-old Stephanie Wirtanen, who said she checked off Bush on her ballot.

Grant said the students researched the candidates and made campaign posters, and many are studying the election process in their curriculum. Some classes even watched the presidential debates, she said.

They also registered at school to vote in the mock election about two weeks ago.

E-mail Jennifer H. Svan at: svanj@stpsrps.osd.mil

USS Blueridge makes routine dock at Yokosuka

BY GREG TYLER
Stars and Stripes

SASEBA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet command ship, the USS Blue Ridge, which was scheduled to maneuver into India Basin berthing slot here Thursday, is making a routine port call following a dry-dock period at Yokosuka Naval Base.

Immediately following a period in dry dock, ships routinely undertake voyages to gauge the success of dry-dock maintenance upgrades and repairs, a Navy official said Wednesday afternoon.

On Thursday night, the Blue Ridge played “a reception on board for local officials and others,” stated Chief Petty Officer Rick Chermizner, a 7th Fleet spokes-

man, by e-mail Wednesday. The duration of the port call was unknown at deadline.

The amphibious command ship Blue Ridge is commanded by Capt. J. Stephen Maynard of Kettering, Ohio. The ship supports maritime missions by “providing a robust communications suite” to allow 7th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert and his staff

to “provide guidance and direction to U.S. naval forces in the region,” Chermizner added.

The Blue Ridge permanently operates out of Yokosuka Naval Base. For information about the Blue Ridge and the 7th Fleet, visit: www.c7navy.mil.

E-mail Greg Tyler at: tylerg@stpsrps.osd.mil

Correction

A story in Thursday’s paper about a gas-price increase at Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station listed the wrong price for diesel fuel. The cost of diesel will increase from \$1.50 to \$2.05 a gallon.

FedEx offices offer free shipping for ballots

BY JOSEPH GIORLONO

Stars and Stripes

YONGSAN GARRISON, South Korea — Still haven't sent in your absentee ballot for next week's presidential election? You're in luck.

Overseas voters are being given a free pass, literally, to ship their ballots by express service to the United States. Through Monday, Federal Express locations around Japan will be offering free service for all absentee ballots.

As part of an agreement with the U.S. government, the ballots will be shipped at no cost to the customers.

The service will be available only at Federal Express offices located in U.S. embassies in those locations, said Alice Lai, a customer service representative for Federal Express in Japan.

"There won't be any service for direct pickup," Lai said, adding that Federal Express has no branches in U.S. military installations in Japan or Okinawa. "But the U.S. embassies in those four cities will accept the free shipments. The ballots can be taken directly to the embassies or one of our FedEx stations there. They can't be placed in a FedEx drop box."

Federal Express operates no

stations in the Hokkaido or Tohoku areas, she added, so the free offer won't be available to U.S. voters residing in those municipalities.

Contact the Federal Express in Japan customer service department at 01-2-000-3200 for more information.

Absentee ballots were a major factor in the confusion following the 2000 election, amid concerns about whether they were filed by the deadlines and whether they were counted accurately.

This year, several states didn't mail their absentee ballots to overseas voters by Sept. 20, which election officials consider a cut-off date for reasonably expect-

ing a ballot to be returned by time for it to be counted.

Election laws vary by state, with most requiring ballots be received before polls close on election day. However, ballots postmarked by election day, even if received soon after election day, are counted before the state sends its electors off to cast the state's electoral votes in December. A close election will also trigger a automatic review in many states, according to Brian McNiff, a spokesman with the Massachusetts Elections Division.

Federal election officials estimate 4.5 million eligible voters reside overseas, including hundreds of thousands of service-

members and government civilian workers. This year, with so many troops deployed to Iraq and other locations around the world — in addition to those stationed in Europe and the Pacific — officials have made an extra push toward ensuring those votes are counted.

The Pentagon has set up a Web site at www.ballotmail.mil — that lets voters download absentee ballots. But according to the New York Times News Service, 23 states have declined to accept ballots filed via the Pentagon system, in some instances citing security concerns.

Vince Little contributed to this story. E-mail Joseph Giorlono at giorlono@jpsr.com

USFJ helps victims of earthquake

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

MISAWA AIR BASE, Japan — U.S. Forces Japan finally received the call it awaited: Japan's government needed plastic sheeting for survivors of last Saturday's Niigata prefecture earthquakes.

USFJ spokeswoman Capt. Michelle Dowdell said Thursday that USFJ received the request through the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo on Tuesday morning, after U.S. Forces Japan provided a list of supplies that could be gathered quickly. "Secretary (Donald) Rumsfeld signed the request personally," Dowdell said. "Within a few hours ... we were able to get a C-130 aircraft on its way."

It left Yokota Air Base near Tokyo on Thursday morning with 6,000 pounds of plastic sheeting, flew to Misawa in northern Japan, refueled and loaded another 6,000 pounds of sheeting.

It was to land at Niigata on Thursday afternoon but broke down at Misawa. The C-130 was to be repaired the same day but Yokota spokeswoman 1st Lt. Warren Comer said delivery was postponed a day because Niigata's airfield isn't equipped for night landings. Another C-130 from Yokota was to pick up the crew, passengers and cargo at Misawa on Thursday, return to Yokota, pick up supplies the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is donating, then fly to Niigata on Friday, Comer said.

"We're going to make sure it gets there but we want to make sure it gets there safely," he said. "And



Senior Airman Jon Paszkot, 374th Airlift Wing C-130 loadmaster, Yokota Air Base, Japan, checks the cargo weight and balance of earthquake relief supplies on the Misawa Air Base flightline Thursday.

we're going to make it there with more supplies."

Capt. O.G. Torres, a C-130 navigator with Yokota's 36th Airlift Squadron and a crew member on the plane Thursday, said, "Any time you get to do a real-world mission to help people out, it's one of the best feelings in the world. And we're giving back to the country that's hosting us."

Though the military offered other items, such as blankets and tents, initial request was for plastic sheeting. "That didn't surprise us ... that was one of the main items we were able to help the Japanese out with during the 1995 Kobe earthquake," said Michael Boyle, a spokesman with the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. The sheeting will be used "for essentially temporary repairs to housing to make them air-tight and to water-tight," he said. "It's a quick way to get people out of the elements."

The death toll from the series of violent earthquakes and after-shocks in the rural prefecture crept past 30 this week; with more than 100,000

MIKAL R. CANFIELD/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

still homeless, cold weather is becoming a more serious threat.

Other U.S. military bases in Japan also were gathering donations. For instance, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Japan Regional Fire Department at Sasebo Naval Base is accepting donations such as new or dry-cleaned and packaged blankets, unused gloves and disposable pocket warmers, base spokeswoman Yoko Aramaki said Thursday afternoon.

"The items can be dropped off at any Sasebo fire department facility by COB (close of business) Monday Nov. 8," she said. Call the fire department at DSN 252-2143 for more information.

"Also, cash, yen and checks are acceptable through the base chaplain's office with the same deadline. The funds will be forwarded to the Japan Red Cross Agency to assist victims of the earthquakes," Aramaki added. Call the chaplain's office at DSN 252-3380 for more information or to make monetary donations.

Grey Tyler contributed to this story.

E-mail Jennifer H. Svan at svan@jpsr.com

Air Force adjusts CJR list

BY LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Air Force officials are tweaking the career job reservation, or CJR, list, adding five specialties to the "constrained" list, for which re-enlistments are prohibited without an airman retraining into another field, and dropping six other jobs from the roster.

Rules require that all first-term airmen must have an approved career job reservation before they can re-enlist, and only first-term airmen selected for re-enlistment by their commander are allowed to apply for a CJR.

If an airman has not gotten a CJR in the job he or she wants by the end of the re-enlistment window, he or she must either retrain into a shortage career field, or leave the service.

Effective Oct. 1, the five newly constrained jobs include:

- 1T1X1 — Aircraft life support
- 2AX3B — Tactic aircraft maintenance for the F-16 and F-17 2AX53D — Integrated avionics systems, communication, navigation, and mission
- 2E1X4 — Visual imagery and intrusion
- 3C0X1 — Communications computer systems operations

Also effective Oct. 1, the six jobs removed from the CJR list include:

- 2ASX2 — helicopter maintenance
- 2M0X2 — missile and space systems maintenance
- 2R0X1 — maintenance management analysis
- 2T3X5 — vehicle body maintenance
- 2W1X9 — aircraft armament systems (includes basic job code and all suffixes)
- 3E0X1 — electrical systems

The CJR was first used in the late 1990s, when retention was poor, but certain career fields were overmanned and those people could be used elsewhere, according to service officials.

Now the service has a different problem: Despite a number of training programs, the service is still over its congressionally authorized end strength by 12,453 airmen, Air Force spokeswoman Jennifer Stephens said Thursday.

The service has several "force shaping" options, including incentives to get people to join reserve units and the new "Blue to Green" interservice transfer program to the Army, which needs to add 20,000 soldiers to its rosters.

Air Staff officials look at job manning levels every month and adjust the CJR list "because we constantly have people coming in and leaving," Master Sgt. Randy Mitchell, a spokesman for the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, told Stripes on Thursday in a telephone interview.

For more information on the CJR and a list of constrained job fields, airmen should look at their Military Personnel Flight's re-enlistment office, or at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/enlist/Reenlistments/CJR.htm.

E-mail Lisa Burgess at burgess@jpsr.com

Marine Corps ball

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Semper Par Society of Yokota Air Base will celebrate the 229th birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps on Nov. 6 in the Enlisted Club's Ohswa Ballroom.

A limited number of seats remain available. Tickets are \$35

and may be purchased with check, cash or club card.

The bash begins at 5:30 p.m. with cocktails, followed by dinner at 6 p.m. The Marine Corps birthday ball ceremony is set for 6:30 p.m., while dancing starts at 9 p.m., with live music by Final Approach.

This year's guest speaker is

Michael Michalak, the deputy chief of mission for the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

Attire is evening dress/dress blue alpha for Marine Corps; mess dress for Air Force; formal dress for Navy and Coast Guard; blue mess/evening dress for Army; and black tie for civilians.

To RSVP and purchase tickets,

contact Sgt. Nguyen at DSN 225-5939 or via e-mail at phong.nguyen@usf.mil

'Gray Wolves' arrive

Electronic Attack Squadron 142 arrived at Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station for six months as part of the U.S. Marine Corps Unit Deployment Program, base

officials announced Wednesday.

The "Gray Wolves" of VAQ-142 replaced the Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1, a unit retrained to their home base at Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, N.C.

The home base of VAQ-142 is Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, Wash.

From staff reports

Ailing Arafat to be sent to Paris for treatment

Doctors say weak leader has low platelet count

By LARA SUKHTEIN

The Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinian officials prepared to fly the ailing Yasser Arafat to Paris for treatment after blood tests found he had a low count of platelets, which help clotting.

Associates said Arafat was too weak to stand Thursday, appeared confused at times and spent most of the day sleeping.

The doctors told reporters there could be a variety of causes for the low count, including blood cancer, and more tests were needed to determine the reasons.

The 75-year-old Arafat will be taken Friday morning to Amman, Jordan, and then he will be flown by plane to Paris, said Munez al-Masri, an Arafat aide. On Thursday, Jordan dispatched two helicopters to the West Bank to pick up Arafat, government spokesman Asma Khader said in Amman.

The Palestinian leader has been sick for the past two weeks but took a turn for the worse Wednesday night when he collapsed and briefly lost consciousness. Arafat's personal physician, Dr. Ashraf Kurdi, said there was no immediate threat to Arafat's life. "His condition is good, his spirits are high,"

Kurdi said.

Arafat's aides released two photos and video said to have been taken Thursday morning showing him sitting in a chair, broadly smiling and holding hands with his doctors. He wore blue pajamas and a dark stocking cap — a rare view of him without his trademark black-and-white checkered headscarf.

But the impending transfer heightens the severity of the health crisis. It would be Arafat's first trip away from his battered, sandbagged headquarters compound in Ramallah since he was confined there by Israel in 2002.

Israel assured the Palestinians on Thursday that if Arafat recovered, he would be able to return to the West Bank, a prominent Israel-Arab lawmaker said.

Palestinian officials have cited

flu and gallstones as possible causes for his sickness in recent days. But the comments by a group of doctors rushed in from Jordan, Egypt and Tunis after Wednesday night's collapse indicated that physicians still were not sure what Arafat's problem was.

Platelets are the blood components that aid in clotting. Low platelets can be caused by many medical problems — including bleeding ulcers, colitis, liver disease and blood cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma — or by treatment with blood thinners like certain heart medications. Israeli officials have speculated Arafat is suffering from cancer in the digestive tract, but the Palestinians said earlier that blood tests and an endoscopy found no sign of cancer.

Israeli defense officials met Thursday to discuss the possibility of Arafat's death. Anxious Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip waited for any scrap of information about his condition, with many fearing his death would plunge their nation into a profound crisis.

French President Jacques Chirac's office said France will send a plane to transport Arafat. On Thursday night, workers cleared out the courtyard of the Ramallah compound to make room for a helicopter for the trip to Amman. A tractor cleared out piles of demolished cars, which Arafat placed in the courtyard months ago, fearing an Israeli invasion was imminent.

After the collapse Wednesday night, Palestinian officials initially tried to play down the health problems, saying he performed Muslim prayers before dawn Thursday and ate a light breakfast of cornflakes and milk.

But a close Arafat associate said the Palestinian leader spent most of the day sleeping. When he awoke, he was moved into a wheelchair because he was very weak and could not stand up, the associate said. At times, Arafat appeared confused, not recognizing some of his visitors, he added.

Arafat has been unable to hold down food, and also suffers from diarrhea, the associate said on condition of anonymity.

Arafat's wife, Suha, arrived at the Ramallah headquarters Thursday after she was called from Tunis to be with her husband.

Suha Arafat lives in Paris with their young daughter, and has not seen her husband since 2001.

Arafat has been confined to the sandbagged, partially demolished compound since May 2002. He has been kept inside both by occasional Israeli military blockades and by threats that he would not be allowed to return if he leaves.

Israel assured the Palestinians on Thursday that if Arafat recovered, he would be able to return to the West Bank, a prominent Israel-Arab lawmaker said.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, center, smiles at his compound in Ramallah in the West Bank on Thursday in this picture released by the Palestinian Authority.

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At Fussa Gate: Left on 16 to light. Turn right. Take next left. Church on left.

Palestinians anxiously await word on condition

The Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinians anxiously monitored Yasser Arafat's declining health Thursday, but there was no spontaneous outpouring of sympathy nor mass vigils outside the compound where he has been confined by Israel for 2½ years.

Throughout Gaza and the West Bank, however, residents waited for any scrap of information about the 75-year-old leader.

"I was awake all the night searching for news about the president's health," said Imad Samara, a teacher from Gaza City. "I pray to God to save him because we need him, he is the safety valve for everything here, he is the father of all the Palestinians."

In four years of Israeli-Palestinian violence, the Palestinian economy has come to a virtual standstill and disorder has gripped much of the Palestinian territories, with rival security forces battling each other over turf.

Saouan Shahin, a law student at Abu Dis University on the outskirts of Jerusalem, said that if Arafat died, there would be a frenzy of violence.

"Everybody loves him, and when he is gone, we will have a civil war that will destroy us," he said. "Some people will not

know how to behave, you will have everyone fighting for power."

As she spoke, the gleaming view of Gaza strongman Mohammed Dahlan drove by, provoking her disgust.

"You see this?" she said. "The tinted, bulletproof windows? They don't welcome us and they can't lead us."

Elsewhere in the West Bank, Nadar Abdel Hadi of Nablus expressed doubts about reports on Arafat's health that played down the severity of his illness. A kiosk displayed newspapers that said Arafat was in good condition.

"I don't believe the news," he said. "I will only believe it when the TV cameras enter his room and show us what his situation is. Our people have never known anything, not about Arafat's health and not about his decisions."

Arafat has been ill for two weeks, but reports about his ailment have varied widely.

Palestinian officials said he had the flu. Israeli officials speculated he might have stomach cancer, but two of his doctors said Wednesday a blood test and a biopsy of tissue from his digestive tract showed no evidence of that.

On Tuesday, a hospital official said Arafat was suffering from a large gallstone. The gallstone, while extremely painful, is not life-threatening and can be easily treated, the official said.

Japan coordinates effort to free 'curious' hostage

Officials discuss ways to save traveler captured in Iraq, but say they won't give in to terrorists

By AUDREY MCAVOY

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese leaders struggled on Thursday to contact militants holding a Japanese traveler hostage as the deadline for the captive's beheading approached. Tokyo stood firm in its refusal to withdraw its troops from Iraq.

Japanese government envoy Shuzen Tanigawa arrived early Thursday in Amman, Jordan, to coordinate diplomatic efforts to free Shosei Koda, whose captors threatened on Tuesday to kill him in 48 hours unless Japan pulled out of Iraq.

The government, however, has few details on the kidnapping and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi acknowledged on Thursday that leaders were hamstrung in their efforts to save the 24-year-old's life.

"We are calling on other countries, and those sympathetic to Japan, and the Iraqi people, but it remains difficult to figure out the situation," Koizumi said. "Mr. Koda is... just an ordinary, curious young man, and we are really hoping for his release."

Later Thursday, Koizumi told reporters: "Our wide-ranging efforts continue but we still don't know where he is."

Japanese diplomats appealed to the United States, the Iraqi government and countries neighboring Iraq for help in winning Koda's freedom. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda said Japan had contacted 25 countries about the case.

In a video posted on a militant Web site Tuesday, the al-Qaida-linked group led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi vowed to kill Koda within 48 hours unless Japan withdrew its troops from Iraq.

Koizumi swiftly refused the demand, saying he wouldn't give in to terrorists.

Late Wednesday, Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura spoke with Secretary of State Colin Powell, who pledged the United States' help and welcomed Koizumi's assurances that Japan would not withdraw. In an interview with Al-Jazeera TV taped Thursday, Machimura urged the militants to spare Koda's life and release him as soon as possible, ministry spokesman Akira Chiba said.

"I understand it is Ramadan, a holy time for Muslims. I sincerely hope that nothing cruel will happen to the hostage during this time," Machimura said.

Japan's National Police Agency said it had dispatched a counter-terror unit to Jordan to help ministry officials gather intelligence.

Koda, who left Japan in January for a yearlong trip starting in New Zealand, told people he met traveling that he wanted to go to Iraq to see the country.

Samer Smeidi, a receptionist at the Cliff Hotel where Koda stayed in Amman, Jordan, said travelers tried to warn Koda that Iraq was very dangerous, but he refused to listen. Smeidi said Koda told him he only had \$100.

Koda's father Masumi, 54, ap-

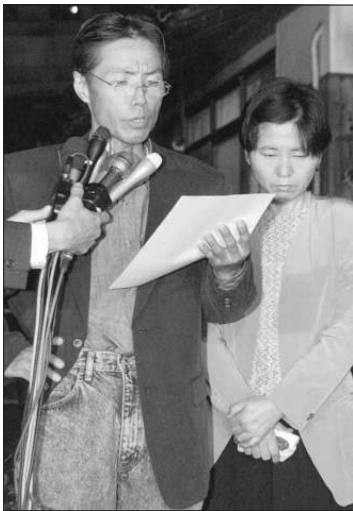
pealed for his son's life in a video-tape aired Wednesday by Al-Jazeera.

"What I want Shosei's kidnappers to understand is that he is not an activist supporting the stay of the Japanese troops in Iraq nor the American policy there," his father said.

Koda's mother, Setsuko, 50, and elder brother, Maki, 26, said they made a similar appeal on Al-Jazeera Thursday.

By Thursday, Koda's family had received as many as 50 irate phone calls, said Masatoshi Norimatsu, the press officer for their hometown of Naogata in Fukuoka prefecture (state), about 560 miles southwest of Tokyo.

Some of the callers demanded to know why "the government had to waste taxpayers' money to try to rescue" Koda and why he went to Iraq knowing it was dangerous, Norimatsu said.



KYODO NEWS/AP

Masumi Koda, left, father of Shosei Koda, a Japanese man kidnapped in Iraq, and the hostage's mother, Setsuko, speak to journalists in Nogata, Japan, on Wednesday.



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Powell backtracks on remarks about Taiwan

BY WILLIAM FOREMAN
The Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Taiwan's government on Thursday applauded U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's decision to back away from his earlier controversial claim that both China and Taiwan favor unification.

Powell's original reference to "a reunification that all parties are seeking" and his comment that self-ruled Taiwan "is not independent" had drawn praise from Beijing and stunned Taipei.

The Taiwanese feared that U.S. policy had changed and that Washington was starting to pressure the democratic island to join China.

Powell clarified his remarks in a TV interview Wednesday with the U.S. television channel CNBC. He said the goal "really is to have a peaceful resolution of the problem" between Taiwan and China, which split amid civil war in 1949.

Most Taiwanese believe China is repressive and don't want to be ruled by the Communist government. But Beijing insists the island, just 100 miles off China's coast, must eventually unify or face invasion — a conflict that could involve U.S. forces, who have helped defend Taiwan before.

For decades, Washington's policy has been to avoid endorsing a specific resolution to the feud. It has simply urged both sides to work out their differences peacefully. In recent years, it has added that Taiwan's people should have a say in any outcome.

On Thursday, Taiwanese Presidential Office spokesman James Huang declined to say whether the government thinks Powell misspoke or was signaling a stronger policy.

But Huang said Powell's clarification "was a positive development and helpful to clarify the whole incident and we will continue to communicate with the U.S. side."

Taiwan's representative in Washington, David Lee, told TVBS cable news that U.S. officials said Washington's policy hasn't changed.

"They've told me again that America's position for the past 30 years is for the two sides to use dialogue to peacefully resolve the problem. It's not to peaceful unification," Lee said.

Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian's view is that Taiwan is an independent nation and that only its voters can determine the island's fate — a position that makes Beijing bristle.

In Beijing on Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue declined to comment specifically on Powell's latest remarks.

Powell on Monday also stunned Taiwan by rejecting the island's claims that it is a sovereign nation. He appeared to support Beijing's claims over Taiwan by saying, "There is only one China."

"Taiwan is not independent," Powell didn't clarify those remarks in his CNBC interview.

Washington doesn't have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, but treats the island like an independent nation for most practical purposes. The United States also sells weapons to Taiwan.

John Tkacik, an Asia analyst, criticized Powell in a scathing essay on the Web site of the Heritage Foundation, a Washington think tank.

Tkacik said Washington must reaffirm that it doesn't take a position on Taiwan's sovereignty "because sovereignty resides in the people of that country."

He warned that unless Powell clearly corrects himself and reaffirms long-standing U.S. policy, his comments will signal China that it's acceptable to take over Taiwan by force.

"That is a green light for a conflict in the Taiwan Strait that the Chinese would be only too happy to observe," he said.

Three foreign election workers kidnapped in Afghanistan

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Armed men in military uniforms stopped a U.N. vehicle in Kabul on Thursday, beating the driver and abducting three foreigners in Afghanistan to help oversee landmark presidential elections.

The daylight kidnapping followed warnings that Taliban militants could target foreigners in an echo of the brutal insurgency rolling Iraq. It came less than a week after a suicide attack killed an American translator in Kabul.

Two of the kidnap victims were women: one with joint British-Irish nationality, and another from Kosovo. The third was a male diplomat from the Philippines. All work for Afghanistan's U.N.-sponsored election body.

A man claiming to speak for a Taliban splinter group, Jamiat Jaish-al-Muslimeen, said it was responsible. The veracity of the claim could not be verified.

After the kidnapping, Afghan forces mounted roadblocks inside and outside of Kabul, as NATO helicopters searched for clues from the sky.

The American military was ready to help "locate and if need be to rescue these individuals when they are found," spokesman Maj. Mark McCann said.

Afghan and U.N. officials said the three were stopped and abducted by about five gunmen.

An Interior Ministry official said the Afghan driver, who was beaten and left behind, told investigators a black four-wheel-drive vehicle with tinted windows pulled in sharply in front of the U.N. SUV.

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Were explosives moved before war started?

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry hammers President Bush's administration over the disappearance of nearly 400 tons of explosives in Iraq, Pentagon experts are suggesting the ordnance could have been moved before the United States invaded in March 2003.

An infantry commander said Wednesday it is "very highly improbable" that someone could have trucked out so much material once U.S. forces arrived in the area.

Col. David Perkins commanded the 2nd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, the division that led the charge into Baghdad. Those troops first captured the Iraqi weapons depot from which 377 tons of explosives disappeared.

Two major roads that pass near the Al-Qaqa installation were filled with U.S. military traffic in the weeks after April 3, 2003, when U.S. troops first reached the area, the colonel said.

Perkins and others in the military acknowledged that some looting at the site had taken place. But he said a large-scale operation to remove the explosives using trucks almost certainly would have been detected.

Perkins, now a staff officer at the Pentagon, was made available to reporters by Defense Department spokesmen.

Just days before the Nov. 2 U.S. election, the Kerry campaign has pointed to the missing explosives as evidence of the Bush administration's poor handling of the war. Bush officials have responded that more than a thousand times that amount of explosives and munitions in Iraq have been recovered or destroyed.

Mike McCurry, an adviser to Kerry, said, "From some of the Pentagon reporting today, there is a window that's available there where either just prior to or just after the invasion, there could have been an opportunity for either Saddam to move the weapons or for something happening after that facility had been abandoned."

"And that is up to the administration to best determine how to answer that question when that

Experts troubled over missing weapons in Iraq

The Associated Press

Weapons at risk

The disappearance of 377 tons of explosives have experts worrying that other weapons might be in jeopardy of falling into insurgent or terrorist hands.



SOURCE: International Atomic Energy Agency

VIENNA, Austria — Revelations that nearly 400 tons of conventional explosives have gone missing in Iraq have experts wondering what other weapons might be in jeopardy of falling into insurgent or terrorist hands.

Even the "100 percent security for 100 percent of the sites." By all accounts, Iraq is studded with weapons depots — many in places where U.S. forces are preoccupied with their fiercest fighting.

Troubling questions about what other weapons might be vulnerable to looting have arisen since the U.N. nuclear agency's warning this week that 377 U.S. tons of non-nuclear explosives disappeared from the former Al-Qaqa military installation south of Baghdad.

"You'd think that those sites would be the highest priority for guarding in the immediate aftermath of the invasion," said Shannon Kyle, senior researcher on nuclear arms control and nonproliferation at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in Sweden.

The explosives missing from Al-Qaqa alone could produce hundreds of thousands of bombs — more than enough to "fuel an insurgency literally for years," Kyle said Tuesday.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei reported their disappearance to the U.N. Security Council on Monday, two weeks

after he said Iraq told his agency that the explosives had vanished as a result of "theft and looting ... due to lack of security."

The explosives included HMX and RDX, key components in plastic explosives such as insurgents in Iraq have used to deadly effect in months of bloody car bomb attacks on the U.S.-led multinational force.

Among Iraq's known weapons depots is one near Khaldiya, about 50 miles west of the capital, where a suicide car bomber attacked a U.S. convoy on Monday, destroying at least two Humvees. Others have been identified around Tikrit and in the desert near Karbala — places where U.S.-led forces have battled insurgents and been targeted by car bombs.

Last week, a U.S. patrol discovered a huge weapons cache at a large depot near Salman Pak, south of Baghdad. The cache included 450 anti-tank mines, 300 grenades, 35 rocket-propelled grenades, as well as mortar shells and primers.

Richard Guthrie, project leader at the Stockholm Institute's chemical and biological warfare project, said he doubts a single group of insurgents could have obtained the missing explosives. The Pentagon said U.S.-led forces who searched the Al-Qaqa facility after last year's invasion found some explosive material, but none of it carried IAEA seals. The nuclear agency's inspectors had sealed storage bunkers shortly before the war because HMX is a "dual use" explosive that also can be used as an igniter on a nuclear bomb.

happened. But they don't have an answer, and that's what we're asking for," McCurry said.

Larry Di Rita, the Pentagon's top spokesman, said what ultimately happened to the explosives is unknown. The department is investigating. But Perkins' description seemed to point toward the possibility that the explosives were removed before the U.S.-led invasion to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, rather than during the chaos afterward.

Meanwhile, The Washington Times reported Thursday that Russian special forces troops moved many of Saddam's weapons and related goods out of Iraq and into Syria in the weeks before the March 2003 military operation.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Vyacheslav Sedov dismissed the allegations as "absurd" and "ridiculous." "I can state officially that the Russian Defense Ministry and its structures couldn't have been involved in the disappearance of the explosives, because all Rus-

sian military experts left Iraq when the international sanctions were introduced during the 1991 Gulf War," he said.

John A. Shaw, the U.S. deputy undersecretary of defense for international technology security, told The Times in an interview that he believes the Russian troops, working with Iraqi intelligence, "almost certainly" removed the high-explosive material.

"The Russians brought in, just before the war got started, a whole series of military units," Shaw was quoted as saying. "Their main job was to shred all evidence of any of the contractual arrangements they had with the Iraqis. The others were transportation units."

Shaw, who was in charge of cataloging the tons of conventional arms provided to Iraq by foreign suppliers, said he recently obtained reliable information on the arms-dispersal program from two European intelligence services that have detailed knowledge of the Russian-Iraqi weapons collaboration.



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Militants abduct, kill 11 Iraqi soldiers



An Iraqi man and child exchange glances with a U.S. Marine during a raid in Ramadi, Iraq, on Thursday. Marines raided dozens of buildings, detained six Iraqis and recovered small arms and ammunition, while insurgents attacked with mortars and detonated a roadside bomb as the Marines returned to their base.

Polish woman taken hostage; Japan can't enlist cleric's aid

BY MARIAM FAM

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Insurgents slaughtered 11 Iraqi soldiers, warning on an Islamic militant Web site Thursday that the fighters will avenge "the blood" of women and children killed in American strikes on the guerrilla stronghold of Fallujah.

The wave of foreigner kidnappings claimed another victim — a Polish woman said to be married to an Iraqi. The kidnappers demanded that Poland withdraw its 2,400 soldiers and that the coalition free all Iraqi women held in the Abu Ghraib prison.

CARE International, meanwhile, announced it was shutting down operations in Iraq, as demanded by kidnappers of the organization's director for Iraq.

Elsewhere, two more American soldiers were killed — one in a car bombing in southern Baghdad and the other in an ambush near Balad, 40 miles north of the capital.

In Tokyo, Japanese authorities said they had failed to enlist the help of a prominent Iraqi cleric in trying to free Japanese hostage Shosai Koda, who was shown in a video aired Tuesday.

An al-Qaida affiliate led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi threatened to behead Koda in 48 hours unless Japan withdraws its troops from Iraq, a demand rejected by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

The killing of the 11 Iraqi National Guardsmen was claimed by the Ansar al-Sunnah Army, which posted a videotape of their brutal deaths on its Web site along with a warning for all Iraqi police and soldiers to desert or face death. The militants said earlier that the soldiers were abducted this week.

After forcing each soldier to state his name and his unit, the mil-

itants forced one of them to the ground and sawed off his head.

The others were forced to kneel with their hands bound as a gunman fired shots into the back of each of their heads.

A voice on the videotape warned all Iraqi soldiers and police to "repent to God, abandon your weapons, go home and beware of supporting the apostate Crusaders or their followers, the Iraqi government, or else you will only find death."

"We will not forget the blood of our elderly, our women and our children that is shed daily in Fallujah, Samarra, Ramadi and elsewhere," a written statement on the Web site warned.

The movement has claimed responsibility for a number of attacks on the hostage takings, including the slaying of 12 Nepalese hostages in August.

U.S. and Iraqi forces are gearing up for a possible assault on Fallujah and other militant strongholds west of Baghdad if community leaders do not hand over foreign fighters and extremists, including al-Zarqawi and his followers.

On Thursday, U.S. aircraft bombed a suspected insurgent safe house in Fallujah, killing two people, hospital officials said.

Insurgents also clashed with U.S. forces in Ramadi, 65 miles west of Fallujah and another militant stronghold. Two people were killed, hospital officials said.

Also Thursday, an armed group calling itself Al-Islam's Army Brigades, Al-Karar Brigade, said it obtained a "huge amount of the explosives" that are missing from the Al-Qaqa weapons installation south of Baghdad.

The claim couldn't be independently verified and the tape offered no evidence that the claim was genuine.

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The Associated Press

As of Wednesday, at least 1,109 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 846 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is three higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated Wednesday at 10 a.m. EDT.

The British military has reported 67 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 1; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia have reported one death each.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 971 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 737 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest death reported by the military:

■ A soldier was killed Wednesday when a motorcycle bomber attacked a U.S. convoy in central Iraq.

The latest identification reported by the military:

■ Marine Capt. Brian Oliveira, 22, Raynham, Mass.; killed Monday in Iraq's Anbar province; assigned to 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Bush, Kerry race to win Midwestern states

The Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio — In a stinging exchange, President Bush criticized Democratic challenger John Kerry as "the wrong man for the wrong job at the wrong time" on Thursday while the Massachusetts senator accused his rival of constantly ducking responsibility for his own actions.

For the fourth consecutive day, Kerry assailed Bush over the disclosure that nearly 400 tons of explosives were missing in Iraq, and said the Republican president's attempt to compare himself to John F. Kennedy was off the mark.

"When the Bay of Pigs went sour, John Kennedy had the courage to look America in the eye and say, 'I take responsibility, it's my fault,'" Kerry said, referring to a bungled invasion of Cuba in 1961. "John Kennedy knew how to take responsibility for the mistakes he made and Mr. President, it's long since time for you to start taking responsibility for the mistakes you made."

The two men raced from one Midwestern state to another in the closing days of their close, contentious campaign for the White House. The polls, ubiquitous as they were, were of little use in forecasting the outcome of the election. Over and over, they made the race out to be a statistical tie, and battleground states too close to call.

Bush began his day in Saginaw, Mich., with an unstinting attack on Kerry. "A president cannot blow in the wind," he said of Kerry. "Senator Kerry has taken a lot of different positions, but he's rarely taken a stand," Bush said. "Consistency is not the senator's strong suit."

Kerry campaigned first in Ohio, arguably the key to victory next Tuesday. A Red Sox cap perched on his head, he recalled that last year when his campaign was struggling, a caller to a radio program said, "John Kerry won't be president until the Red Sox win the World Series."

"Well, we're on our way," he said to cheers.

Kerry's crowd was raucous, so noisy that at one point he said, "I hope George Bush can hear that — that is the rumble of change comin' in."

Kerry has turned the issue of missing explosives into a major focus of his campaign

Candidates congratulate baseball champs

The Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio — Count Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts among those Boston baseball fans who have waited a lifetime to see the Red Sox win the World Series. President Bush says he's excited, too.

Kerry, wearing a Red Sox cap as he bounded into a morning rally in Toledo, recalled someone phoning a radio show early in the campaign and saying, "John Kerry won't be president until the Red Sox win the World Series." He exclaimed, "Well, we're on our way!"

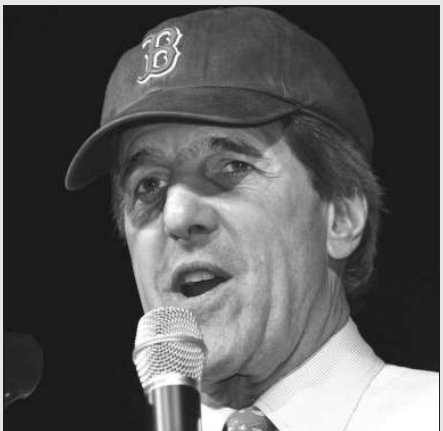
Not everybody felt that way. Boston pitcher Curt Schilling, interviewed on ABC's "Good Morning America," said, "Tell everybody to vote. And vote Bush next week." Bush congratulated the team's owner and president by phone — and thanked Schilling for his support.

The president watched part of the final game Wednesday night as the Red Sox defeated the St. Louis Cardinals, completing a four-game sweep to win their first World Series title since 1918, said spokesman Scott McClellan. "This is a long time coming and he shares in their excitement at winning the World Series," McClellan said.

Kerry said, "I've been rooting for this day since I was a kid. ... This Red Sox team came back against all odds and showed America what heart is. In 2004, the Red Sox are America's team."

this week, and his running mate joined in.

"They had a responsibility to secure this material," Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina said on NBC's "Today" on Thursday. "It was important for securing Iraq, it was important for the safety of our troops, it was important for keeping that material out of the



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts wears a Boston Red Sox on Thursday as he speaks at a rally at the University of Toledo in Ohio.

hands of terrorists. And what we know is, they didn't do it."

Bush sought to turn the controversy to his own advantage. He said his rival was showing a "complete disregard for the facts. Senator Kerry will say anything to get elected," the president said.

Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, said the troops in Iraq, not the president, bore the responsibility for searching for the explosives, and he said no one knows if any mistakes were made.

John Kerry wants to pretend we do know what happened," Giuliani told "Today." "We don't know what happened. The best possibility is that those explosives were gone even before the troops got there ... at least it's an equal possibility. John Kerry hasn't admitted that. Instead, John Kerry became an attack dog."

Bush was stumping in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, in the reverse order of a Pennsylvania-Ohio-Michigan swing Wednesday that was capped by an early evening crowd of close to 20,000 at the Pontiac, Mich., Silverdome, one of the best turnouts of his campaign. Kerry was focusing on Ohio and Wisconsin before swinging south to spend Friday in Florida.

Kerry was keeping up his drumbeat of criticism over the circumstances surrounding the explosives in Iraq.

"A political candidate who jumps to conclusions without knowing the facts is not a person you want as your commander in chief," Bush told supporters Wednesday.

Kerry retorted on Thursday, "Mr. President, I agree with you." He then recited a list of times he said Bush had been guilty of just that.

Polls suggest Bush and Kerry are running even not only in Iowa and Michigan, but in an improbable variety of other battleground states and nationally as well. Bush pressed hard for crossover votes.

"If you're a Democrat, and your dreams and goals are not found in the far left wing of the Democrat party, I'd be honored to have your vote," he said at several appearances.

Vice President Dick Cheney said Wednesday night in Wisconsin that the terrorists and insurgents "know once those elections are held, they're out of business. They've said as much" in "communications that we've captured between Zarqawi and the bin Laden crowd."



President Bush speaks Thursday at a campaign rally at the Westlake Recreation Center, in Westlake, Ohio, as former Senator Bob Dole, left, and General Tommy Franks right, take in the scene.

'Too close to leave anything to chance'

Campaign strategies go beyond battleground states

BY RON FOURNIER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The road to the White House is taking some strange and sharp turns as tightening polls and pressure from party stalwarts force the presidential campaigns to adjust their strategies.

In a flurry of homestretch activity, former President Clinton was giving satellite interviews to television stations in reliably Democratic Hawaii to shore up Sen. John Kerry's campaign Wednesday, and President Bush poured last-minute money into the North-east to keep Democrats at bay in New Hampshire.

That's not all. Bowing to pressure from a former president and two senators, Democrats shifted resources to West Virginia and Arkansas despite doubts on Kerry's team about his ability to win them.

Democrats are adding money to Michigan, reflecting concerns that Kerry has failed to nail down the must-win state.

And what's with the polls showing Arizona and New Jersey so close? "Both sides are playing everywhere they can, because it's a close race and because they can — money is no problem for either campaign so they're spreading it around," said Democratic consultant Dane Strother of Washington. "It's too close to leave anything to chance."

In a close race, presidential campaigns focus energy on states that could add up to the winning 270 Electoral College votes, a majority of the 538 available.

Winning a state, even by the smallest of margins, entitles a candidate to all of that state's electoral votes — except in Maine and Nebraska. Those states split their electoral votes, awarding two to the candidate who wins the popular vote across the state and one to the popular-vote-winner in each congressional district.

This campaign is no exception to past close races, with nine states getting the most attention and adver-

tising because polls show the candidates essentially tied in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Nevada and Wisconsin.

A few others, including Bush-leaning Colorado and Kerry-leaning Michigan, are not quite tossups. But they're not quite forgotten, either.

Hawaii backed Al Gore by nearly 20 percentage points in 2000 and only votes Republican in re-election landslides — Ronald Reagan in 1984 and Richard Nixon in 1972. Polls show Bush within striking distance of Kerry, forcing the Democratic National Committee to begin advertising on the islands Wednesday and prompting Clinton to arrange the interviews.

Bush increased his advertising budget in Maine this week after reducing it several days ago. The reversal had nothing to do with Maine voters; the White House believes Kerry will win the state's four electoral votes unless Bush wins the popular vote by a wide margin.

It's about New Hampshire, strategists in both parties say. The two states share television markets and polls show Kerry threatening Bush's fragile grip on New Hampshire's four electoral votes.

Surveys also suggest the race is close in Arkansas, West Virginia and Missouri. The DNC is considering an 11th-hour advertising campaign in Missouri. Most of Kerry's team in the state left weeks ago.

As for Bush, his advisers sent a Republican events planner from Oregon to Ohio in recent days after concluding there won't be any events to plan in the Democratic-leaning West Coast.

"Both sides are looking under every rock and in every corner for every potential electoral vote," said Republican consultant Joe Gaylord of Washington. "That will go on until Friday. And then it's all about Ohio and Florida."

Rulings come fast, furious

Many states are facing legal challenges over possible voting problems Nov. 2. A look at some of the developments this week:

Colorado

■ A federal judge left it up to the voters to decide on Election Day whether to change the way Colorado distributes its electoral votes for president. The judge dismissed a lawsuit that challenged a Colorado ballot provision involving the Electoral College.

■ The Denver Post reported that as many as 3,700 people have registered to vote in more than one Colorado county this year, nearly two-thirds of them college-age voters. Election officials said they are working to catch double registrants, but concede double voting might occur on Nov. 2.

Florida

■ A judge ruled that state election officials will not be required to process incomplete voter registration forms for the presidential election. At issue are registration forms from voters who do not check a box confirming they are American citizens, even if they sign an oath swearing they are citizens.

■ Nearly 300 voters in St. Petersburg received absentee ballots that were missing the second of two pages, Pinellas County elections officials acknowledged. County Elections Supervisor Deborah Clark promised Tuesday to correct the error by Nov. 2. Her office has mailed the inadvertently omitted page to the 293 affected voters, along with an explanation and a postage-paid envelope.

Iowa

■ A judge declined to rule immediately in a Republican lawsuit challenging a plan to allow Iowans to cast provisional ballots

outside of their home precincts. A Poll County District judge said the suit could go forward after the state issues final election rules on Thursday.

Michigan

■ A federal appeals court ruled that provisional ballots cast outside the precinct where a voter resides cannot be counted in Michigan. The ruling followed a similar decision by the same court in an Ohio case last weekend. It is yet another defeat for Democrats over provisional ballots.

New Jersey

■ A judge ruled that voters will be able to use electronic voting machines Nov. 2, rejecting an effort to shut the way 3 million residents cast their ballots. The judge said the machines have a long record of being reliable.

Ohio

■ The secretary of state ordered county election boards to let voters whose registrations are successfully challenged to still cast provisional ballots on Election Day. The order followed the Ohio Republican Party's challenge of the registrations of 25,000 voters last week. Democrats have sued to block the Republican challenge.

■ The U.S. Supreme Court declined to put independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader on the ballot in Ohio.

Pennsylvania

■ Two servicemembers serving in Iraq and Hawaii filed a federal lawsuit in Harrisburg seeking a 15-day extension for the return of overseas ballots. They contend the distribution of absentee and overseas ballots was delayed over a legal challenge to independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader's nominating petition.

From The Associated Press

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Florida tells absentee voters that ballots are in the mail

The Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — With voters jamming phone lines saying they haven't received absentee ballots in the mail, elections officials planned to mail out thousands of replacement ballots.

As election workers and the U.S. Postal Service traded the blame Wednesday, Broward County elections supervisor Brenda Snipes moved to solve the problem with less than a week before the presidential election by sending duplicates to people who had not returned the original ballot.

Attention focused on a batch of 58,000 Broward ballots given to the Postal Service on Oct. 7-8. Though some voters have completed and returned ballots mailed those days, hundreds of others have called to complain their forms have not arrived.

"This isn't a blame game," Snipes told The Miami Herald.

"What we're concentrating on is getting the ballots

to the voter." She was named to the job by Gov. Jeb Bush after the 2000 elections supervisor quit during the bitter presidential vote recount and her replacement was suspended for bungling.

Snipes estimated she would resend no more than 20,000 ballots, but about 76,000 ballots sent by her office have not been returned.

Overnight mail was to be used to send new ballots to voters living outside the county, such as college students.

Because of the volume of calls, Broward County commissioners assigned 40 new workers to phone duty at the election office and early voting sites, where voters have been routinely waiting in line up to two hours to reach touch-screen voting machines.

Tony Fransetta, president of the Florida Alliance for Retired Americans, said the delays could put thousands of seniors' votes in jeopardy.

Many older Americans rely on absentee ballots because are disabled or unable to drive to the polls, he said.

Early ballots gaining popularity

BY NANCY BENAC

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans are casting early ballots in droves this year, and their reasons are as varied as their politics: Some can't wait to register their opinions. Some like the convenience.

Some just want to be left alone.

In New Jersey's Somerset County, elections administrator Janice Hoffman says she's seeing more people make the extra effort to personally walk their ballots in.

"No dangling chads or mine!" a satisfied Barry Burke pronounced after voting electronically this week in Little Rock, Ark.

Whatever the voters' motivations, Democrats and Republicans alike are tracking their balloting day by day and county by county, hoping to turn the early voting trend to their advantage.

"There's a basic rule here: More is better," said Charles Baker, captain of the Democrats' early vote operation. "We are seeing, in a number of states, significantly higher vote-by-mail and early voting numbers than historically has been the case and that has to be a good thing for the Democrats."

Republicans, for their part, claim their four-year-long early vote operation has become more effective at targeting sympathetic

voters who might be less likely to turn out on Election Day. "What you're often seeing with the Democrats is simply the substitution of an absentee or early vote for an Election Day vote," said Bush campaign manager Ken Mehlman.

With 32 states now offering some form of early voting, an AP-Ipsos poll taken last weekend found 11 percent of voters across the United States already had cast ballots, and another 11 percent intended to beat the Election Day rush as well. Early voting is particularly popular in the West, with half or more of all voters likely to be cast early in states such as Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Washington.



AP

Mary Sullivan sits in her new home, where she is a five-in-home care provider, in Bexley, Ohio. Sullivan was homeless when she registered to vote and her registration is now being challenged by Ohio Republicans.

Federal judge halts GOP challenges to voters in Ohio

BY ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — One voter picks up letters at the post office because trucks kept hitting his mailbox. Another serves in Iraq. Hundreds more are homeless, listing shelters as permanent addresses.

All are among the 35,000 whose eligibility has been challenged by the Ohio Republican Party. Since mail came back undelivered, the GOP says, those registrations could be fraudulent. Democrats say the GOP is trying to keep poor and minorities, who move more often, from voting.

A federal judge put a temporary halt to the challenges Wednesday, ruling in favor of Democrats who said the GOP was targeting new voters registered by political groups supporting Sen. John Kerry, the Democratic challenger to President Bush. U.S. District Judge Susan Dlott ruled that six county elections board should stop hearings scheduled this week in Ohio, a hotly contested state.

In southwest Ohio, Republicans challenged the registration of Surjo Banerjee, a fact his brother found unusual. Banerjee, 40, is an Army sergeant who is now in Fallujah, Iraq.

Banerjee, also a veteran of the first Gulf War, uses his brother's house in Centerville as a permanent address even though he has lived around the world, said his brother, Dr. Partha Banerjee.

Republicans withdrew all 2,319

challenges in Montgomery County, including the one against Banerjee, after acknowledging several mistakes in its mailing.

In suburban Franklin County, the registration of Raven Shaffer was wrongly challenged because he gets mail at a post office box, according to the federal lawsuit filed Tuesday by Democrats. The family's mailbox has been repeatedly hit by delivery trucks, the lawsuit said.

Also in Franklin County, 291 homeless people are being questioned out of the 2,370 total challenges, according to an analysis of the challenges by the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio. In Cuyahoga County, 757 people of the 17,717 total being challenged are homeless.

"We're very concerned that people that have chosen to participate in our democratic process, who took a big step in registering to vote and who were poised to go to the polls on Nov. 2, are going to be disenfranchised, and we may never get them back," said Bill Faith, COHHIO executive director.

Mary Sullivan, 57, looked for work for a year after losing her job as a receptionist and prescription filler for a local drug maker in August 2003. She was evicted from her apartment after her money ran out this past June and spent two months at Friends of the Homeless, a shelter on Columbus' east side. "My vote has to be counted," Sullivan said. "Just because you're homeless doesn't mean you're stupid."

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Americans becoming taller, but fatter, too

BY LAURA MECKLER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Better nutrition has helped Americans grow a little taller. But it's been too much of a good thing. The nation is also a whole lot fatter.

Adults are roughly an inch taller than they were in the early 1960s, on average, and nearly 25 pounds heavier, the government reported Wednesday.

The nation's expanding waistline has been well-documented, though Wednesday's report is the first to quantify it based on how many pounds the average person is carrying.

The reasons are no surprise: more fast food, more television and less walking around the neighborhood, to name a few. Earlier this year, researchers reported that obesity fueled by poor diet and lack of activity threatens to overtake tobacco use as the leading preventable cause of death.

In 1960-62, the average man

weighed 166.3 pounds. By 1999-2002, the average had reached 191 pounds, according to the National Center for Health Statistics — part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — which issued the report. Similarly, the report said, the average woman's weight rose from 140.2 pounds to 164.3 pounds.

The trends are the same for children, the report said: Average 10-year-olds weighed about 11 pounds more in 1999-2002 than they did 40 years ago. So expect the next generation of adults to be even heavier than they are today, said Dr. Samuel Klein, director of the Center for Human Nutrition at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

"All the kids who are obese now will become obese adults," Klein said. "What will happen with the next generation of adults is really scary."

Obesity can increase the likelihood of diabetes, high blood pres-

sure, high cholesterol and other health problems.

The report also documented an increase in weight when measured by body mass index, a scale that takes into account both height and weight. Average BMI for adults, ages 20 to 74, has increased from about 25 to 28 over the 40-year span. Anyone with a BMI of 25 and up is considered overweight, and those with BMIs of 30 or more are considered obese.

At the same time, though less dramatically, Americans are getting a little bit taller.

Men's average height increased from 5 feet 8 inches in the early 1960s to 5 feet 9 1/2 inches in 1999-2002. The average height of a woman, meanwhile, went from just over 5 feet 3 inches to 5 feet 4 inches.

The increases in height and weight are both fueled by the availability of more food, researchers say.

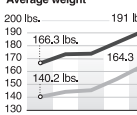
About 2 in 3 adults in 1999-2002 were considered overweight.

Study shows America's expanding waistline

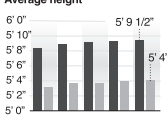
American adults are nearly 25 pounds heavier and roughly an inch taller than they were in 1960, according to a new report from the National Center for Health Statistics.

Men Women

Average weight



Average height



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

AP

Exchange at deli turns deadly

BY TOM HAYS

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — On a crisp fall night, John Malik and Manuel Chametla shared what should have been an unmemorable moment at the deli counter: a customer asking the clerk to cash a winning lottery ticket.

Instead, the clerk ended up dead, killed by a gun the customer always carried.

One witness says the blast was followed by Chametla asking, with his last breaths, "Why did he shoot me?"

No one can say for sure.

More than a week after the killing in a Queens neighborhood Oct. 18, authorities still haven't decided if Malik, a 60-year-old retired police officer who insists the gun went off accidentally, should face criminal charges. A spokesman for prosecutors would say only that the shooting remains under investigation.

Malik's attorney, John Murphy Jr., has told reporters that his client was carrying the gun legally and didn't commit a crime. "It was a terrible accident," he said.

Chametla was 18, a native of Mexico who had

come to this country about two years ago. Once he earned enough money, Chametla hoped to return to his homeland to make a home with his girlfriend and 3-year-old son, his father said.

Malik was a regular at the deli, where Noe Chametla had also worked. The father claimed the retired officer often would brag he still carried a pistol.

"He liked to point his finger and say, 'I'm the police. I'm going to shoot you,'" Noe Chametla said. "I didn't like that kind of game."

The father suspects Malik was flashing his gun when it discharged. But the retired officer, according to authorities, says he was reaching for his pager when he accidentally dropped his gun.

As he fumbled to catch the weapon, it fired a single bullet into Chametla's chest.

The only other witness, a 16-year-old clerk named Felipe Santiago Villares, has given varying accounts.

Right after the shooting, Villares told investigators he was in the back of the deli when a gunshot rang out. He saw Chametla fall to the floor and heard Malik yell for someone to call 911.

In news reports, Villares was quoted as claiming Malik had jokingly threatened to shoot Chametla if he didn't serve him faster — a detail police say the witness left out of his initial version.



A pedestrian looks at a makeshift memorial in front of the Astoria Market on Saturday in New York, where Manuel Chametla, an employee of the food store, was shot and killed Oct. 18 by a retired police officer. Authorities still haven't decided if the shooter — who insists the gun went off accidentally — should face criminal charges.

Study: Sensitivity to bitter tastes linked to slimmness

BY LINDA A. JOHNSON

The Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — Could a sensitive palate be the key to a svelter figure? Maybe, say researchers at Rutgers University and elsewhere who have found people especially sensitive to bitter compounds in broccoli and other foods tend to be thinner than others.

A new Rutgers study, on nearly 50 women in their 40s, found "super tasters," people most sensitive to bitter tastes, were 20 percent thinner than "nontasters," those not sensitive to bitter tastes.

"People who are nontasters tend to like foods that are fattier, sweeter, hotter and more bitter," said Beverly Tepper, a professor of food science at Rutgers.

"They tend to eat more fatty foods," she said. "What we believe is that if nontasters pursue this kind of dietary pattern over time, that this would lead to higher body weight."

"Super tasters instead appear to eat less food overall — be it high-fat foods or healthy, bitter vegetables, according to preliminary research.

Tepper's study, which awaits publication, found super tasters had an average body-mass index of 23.5. Medium tasters had an average of 26.6, and nontasters an average of nearly 30.

Body-mass index measures weight relative to height. A BMI of 25 and above is considered overweight; 30 and higher is obese.

Tepper's study is small, but it's her fourth with similar findings, including one involving New Jersey preschool children.

That research found the nontaster kids preferred full-fat to low-fat milk and ate more added fats such as butter and salad dressing than the other children.

Tepper said the strongest association she's found has been in middle-aged women. She said about 50 percent of Americans are medium tasters and 25 percent each are super tasters or nontasters.

Those classifications are actually based on sensitivity to a chemical, known as PROP for short, that is very similar to compounds that make foods such as broccoli and Brussels

sprouts taste bitter. Some scientists dispute the association between sensitivity to PROP and body size, but researchers at Yale University and University of Connecticut have produced results similar to Tepper's.

Laurie Lucchini, a former researcher and instructor at both schools who now does research for Gillette Co.'s oral care division, repeatedly tested taste and smell sensitivity of elderly women. "We found people who could taste PROP as more bitter were significantly thinner," she said.

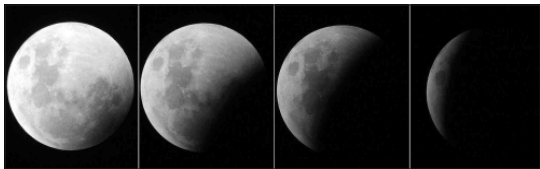
She said super tasters generally perceive sweet, sour and salty tastes — not just bitter ones — more intensely than others.

Some researchers haven't found a link between PROP and body size, including Richard Mattes, professor of foods and nutrition at Purdue University in Indiana.

"I am a great skeptic of the role of PROP in food intake and body mass," he said, partly because people sensitive to the chemical may not be turned off by bitter compounds in foods such as chocolate and coffee, where milk or other sweet flavors mask the taste.



Rutgers University food science graduate student Elizabeth White demonstrates a taste test in the sensory evaluation lab in New Brunswick, N.J., on Wednesday.



The moon, seen in four different photographs, is partially covered by the Earth's shadow during Wednesday's lunar eclipse in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The four photographs were taken from left at 10:21 p.m., 10:30 p.m., 10:56 p.m. and 11:28 p.m., Buenos Aires time. The next such eclipse will be in March 2007.

Earthlings savor eclipse

BY SARAH BRUMFIELD

The Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Earth's last total lunar eclipse for nearly two and a half years didn't disappoint.

Baltimore resident Davis Sherman visited the Maryland Science Center with his 15-year-old son for the event, which began Wednesday about 9:15 p.m. EDT and was expected to last around three hours and 20 minutes.

"It's a spectacular show," Sherman said.

Tony and Carline Cazeau of Columbia brought their two daughters, Gabrielle, 12, and Valerie, 8, to the science center for the educational experience.

"It looks like chocolate," Valerie said.

With the Earth passing directly between the sun and the moon, the only light hitting the full moon was from the planet's sunrises and sunsets, resulting in an orange and red hue. Visitors at the science center's Crosby Ramsey Memorial Observatory peered at the moon through its telescope.

Jim O'Leary, senior director of technology, IMAX, at the Science Center's Davis Planetarium, said there are usually two or three lunar eclipses a year, but there won't be any in 2005 or 2006.

"This one is a particularly long one," he said.

Outside the science center, Baltimore Astronomical Society President Darryl Mason projected the images from a powerful telescope

onto a screen for passers-by to see. He said he hopes the eclipse helps introduce more young people to astronomy.

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, total lunar eclipses give scientists a chance to assess the quality of Earth's atmosphere. Ash from volcanic eruptions, for example, can make an eclipsed moon look much darker. The recent eruptions of Mount St. Helens in Washington were not expected to affect the eclipse because they consisted of far more steam than ash.

The last total lunar eclipse was May 4, but it wasn't visible from North America, NASA said.

The next total eclipse of the moon will not be until March 2007.

Dwarf woman's skeleton could alter history of human evolution

BY JOSEPH B. VERRONGIA

The Associated Press

In an astonishing discovery that could rewrite the history of human evolution, scientists say they have found the skeleton of a new human species, a dwarfed, lost World while modern man rapidly colonized the rest of the planet.

The finding on a remote Indonesian island has stunned anthropologists like no other in recent memory. It is a fundamentally new creature that bears more of a resemblance to fictional, barefooted hobbits than modern humans.

Yet biologically speaking, it may have been closely related to us and perhaps even shared its caves with our ancestors.

The 3-foot-tall adult female skeleton found in a cave is believed 18,000 years old. It smashes the long-cherished scientific belief that our species, Homo sapiens, systematically crowded out other upright-walking human cousins beginning 160,000 years ago and that we'd had Earth to ourselves for tens of thousands of years.

Instead, it suggests recent evolution was more complex than previously thought.

And it demonstrates that Africa, the acknowledged cradle of humanity, does not hold all the answers to persistent questions of how — and where — we came to be.



Professor Richard Roberts points Thursday to an artist impression of a hobbit-like dwarf, a discovery that could rewrite the history of human evolution in Sydney, Australia. A 3-foot-tall adult female skeleton, found in a remote Indonesian island, is believed 18,000 years old.

"This finding really does rewrite our knowledge of human evolution," said Chris Stringer, who directs human origins studies at the Natural History Museum in London. "And to have them present less than 20,000 years ago is frankly astonishing."

Scientists called the dwarf skeleton "the most extreme" figure to be included in the extended human family. Certainly, she is the shortest.

She is the best example of a trove of fragmented bones that account for as many as seven of

these primitive individuals that lived on the equatorial island of Flores, located east of Java and northwest of Australia. The mostly intact female skeleton was found in September 2003.

Scientists have named the extinct species Homo floresiensis, or Flores Man, and details appear in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature.

The specimens' ages range from 95,000 to 12,000 years old, meaning they lived until the threshold of recorded human history and perhaps crossed paths with the ancestors of today's islanders.

Louisville Slugger Museum auctioning Hall of Famers' bats, baseball artifacts

BY CHRIS DUNCAN

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The Louisville Slugger Museum is having a rummage sale.

A Hall of Fame-caliber collection of bats, balls, photos and other items will be up for bidding at a public auction at the museum Nov. 6. Many of the items were dredged from a warehouse and file cabinets in the basement of the Hillerich & Bradsher Co.'s downtown museum and factory, where the trademark bats are still manufactured.

"It's monumentally significant," said David Hunt, president of Hunt Auctions, the firm selected by Louisville Slugger to organize the event. "It's not just the desirability of the items or the rarity, but for them to come straight from H&B's archives, that makes the collection almost unequalled."

Marquee items include Louisville Sluggers handled by "Shoelless" Joe Jackson, Ty Cobb, Jim Thorpe and Babe Ruth. The collection also includes a ball signed by both Ruth and Lou Gehrig, a Cleveland Indians jersey worn by Satchel Paige and a letter handwritten by Ruth with six of his signatures at the bottom.

"There are things so unique in this auction that have never been publicly sold," said David Bushing, a bat expert and authenticator.

"It's going to be quite an event for collectors."

The proceeds from the auction will create a fund the museum will use to obtain other baseball artifacts, said Anne Jewell, the museum's executive director. The museum's wish list includes a complete set of bats from every slugger in the 500-home run club.

"It just makes sense for us to trade things, like you do baseball cards," Jewell said. "In a trade, if there's something you're lacking, you look at what you've got that someone else might be interested in and that helps you acquire new things."

"We look at our collection and we know there are some holes in it. We need to stay fresh and vital."

The Jackson bat figures to be the auction's highlight. Cracked on the handle and worn on the barrel, the bat has Jackson's signature along the hitting area in

bold ink. Bushing said the item will likely draw a price "deep in the six figures."

The bat was acquired from the estate of Syd Smith, a Jackson teammate and close friend. Bushing said there's no proof Jackson actually used the bat, but it is the only known one autographed by the enigmatic Jackson, who batted .356 from 1908 to 1920. Although acquired by a jury on charges he helped fix the 1919 World Series, Jackson was banned from baseball in 1921 by commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis and never made the Hall of Fame.

"I don't know if the Jackson bat is the star of the show, but it's definitely going to be in the top five," Bushing said.

"The fact that it could've been used by Joe Jackson adds to the mystique. If there was proof it was Joe Jackson's game bat — one that he used in games — we'd talk about it, we'd be talking about millions of dollars."

The Thorpe bat still has a ring of black handle tape, ball marks on the barrel and two small cobbler's nails hammered into the end.

Thorpe believed the nails would strengthen the bat and had them inserted at a shoe store in Ohio.

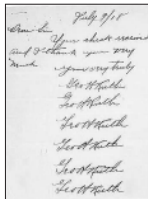
Thorpe was stripped of the two gold medals he won at the 1912 Olympics because he had signed a semi-pro contract before the games. He signed with the New York Giants in 1913 and played in the majors for six seasons. The bats dates to between 1917 and 1920.

Like the Jackson bat, the Thorpe model was consigned to the auction from outside the museum.

The gem of the museum's collection is a bat used by Cobb, circa 1911-15, with grease-pencil markings made on the side. The markings were not autographed by Cobb, but by Henry Morrow, Hillerich & Bradsher's receiving agent in Cobb's era.

When a player returned a bat to the factory, Morrow wrote the date, the player's name and the city or team where the bat originated. Bushing said the markings increase the bat's value, which he guessed at between \$100,000 and \$125,000.

"Side-writing in the world of bat collecting is as good as a letter of authenticity," Bushing said.



HUNT AUCTIONS/AP

A handwritten letter by George H. "Babe" Ruth, shown in this undated photo, is one of the items to be auctioned off Nov. 6 at the Louisville Slugger Museum in Kentucky. The letter, dated July 9, 1918, was sent to Frank Bradsher of the Louisville Slugger company and includes six genuine Ruth signatures at the bottom for use on baseball bats.

FACES

Futureheads rock onto U.S. scene

BY SUSAN CARPENTER
Los Angeles Times

The working-class city of Sunderland, England, is home to 50 bars, two strip clubs and zero movie theaters or rock venues, placing it exactly nowhere in the minds of most Americans, or Brits for that matter.

But that's likely to change thanks to a quartet of young lads known as the Futureheads, a group whose "naughty and abrasive" music, as one of the members describes it, is among the most innovative and exciting in the growing post-post-punk scene.

Never heard of them? No worries. If the world is a just place, they should be everywhere soon enough. The Futureheads make some of the smartest, most fun avant-pop around.

Judging from reactions at the group's first L.A. show at SpaceLand last month, the Futureheads have nothing to worry about when it comes to finding an audience. First, the club was packed, even though the group's debut record had not washed up on American shores.

Second, more than a few folks in the ordinarily motionless, been-there, done-that crowd even danced. Danced! "The reaction was a little bit more than we expected," says Millard, the band's bookish-looking guitarist-vocalist, said the next day on the group's tour bus. "In cities that are famous for a burgeoning music scene, you expect people to be a little more standoffish at gigs ... but it was like playing a show back where we're from. It was the same atmosphere, and the crowd — there was an intimacy there. We could relax onstage."

"Relaxed" isn't the word that comes to mind when seeing the Futureheads perform. The group played with the wound-up intensity of a coiled spring, unleashing its manic energy through quick blasts

of guitar that stopped on a dime and harmonized, cuckoo-clock vocals as each of the band's four members popped in and ducked out of songs for a word, phrase or stanza.

The group is young — made up of Millard, 22, and his "best mates" Jaff, 22 (bass), and brothers Barry and David Hyde, 23 and 19 (lead vocals/guitar and drums, respectively).

Friends before they came together as a band in 2000, the group had met a couple of years earlier at the Sunderland City Detached Youth Project, a music program for at-risk youth in the down-and-out northeastern city that was once supported by coal mining and shipbuilding — industries that closed up shop long ago.

No one in the group fit the stereotypical profile of kids drinking on street corners or stealing cars; each was a musician with another band, simply taking advantage of the free practice space.

They got together as the Futureheads after their respective groups had split up.

After some early touring, the group got back home and wrote and recorded their first four-song singles, including two songs that also appeared on their album debut. "Robot" and "Stupid and Shallow" are among the record's standouts — their fast-paced, staccato harmonies and asymmetrical rhythms defining the group's sound, which teeters on the edge of art rock but ultimately is pop.

The Futureheads just wrapped their first North American tour, opening for Scottish faves Franz Ferdinand. They'll play the Troubadour in Hollywood on Nov. 20 as part of their first U.S. headline tour.

In the meantime, they're just relaxing in Sunderland, where they plan to stay, even though shops close at 4 and, David says, "There's absolutely nothing to do but go out and eat and drink."



LATWP

The Futureheads are a British band in the vintage art-punk vein. Their debut record was released in the States on Oct. 26. Left to right in rear: Jeff Jaff, Barry Hyde, and Dave Hyde. In front is Ross Millard.



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas News Bureau

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Horoscope

Lucky Jupiter and dreamy Neptune are featured, and the question that arises is: What is good luck anyway? The answer is, it's really too soon to tell. An event that appears on the surface to be negative or neutral winds up being a blessing two or three moves into the game.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(Oct. 30). You've got so much to give that loved ones flock to you. In the coming year, your life will be centered on home and family. Some of you will move into a new house in April. Others will remodel, redecorate or repair. Get especially into lots of entertaining, especially dinner parties. A mother figure in your life will require more of your attention.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Stop talking, and start doing. The opportunity of a lifetime could be within your grasp, but you're never going to know for sure unless you give it your best shot.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Get ready for winter — there's much to do before the next frost. Speaking of frost, a certain someone in your life who's been giving you the cold shoulder will now be more receptive to your warm and friendly vibe.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). There will be a few more bumps in the road before things get better. But it absolutely will get better, and soon. Use this time to really think about what you want to accomplish out of life.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You can be a master manipulator when you really want to be. In fact, it comes so naturally to you that sometimes you don't even know you're doing it. Today, pay careful attention to what you say and how you say it.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You could become disillusioned with a situation, but this is merely a sign

that you have fantastically high hopes at one time. Maybe it's too early to give those up.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Everything you do today, you do for the love of it. Because you have no other agenda, you're extraordinarily lucky in your pursuits.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It's easy to get so caught up in being busy that you're taking part in activities that do absolutely nothing to feed your soul. Meanwhile, your talents are so underused, you've forgotten that you possess them.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You're invigorated. Is it the idea that you could have more out of life that pushes you to strive, or is it the sheer act of striving that makes you feel vital? Either way, you're in an expansive mood.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). There is a delicate balance at work in relationships, and you're in just the mood to upset that balance. Why? For the sake of change, adventure and mischief. Be careful.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Events set you in motion, or is it the other way around? It's hard to say whether you are reacting to the world or it is reacting to you, but the one thing you know for sure is that you've got incredible momentum.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Finally, things slow down to a pace you can handle — or, better, savor. Precious moments with loved ones make you realize how lucky you are. People compete for your favor. Deal equally with everyone, and you'll be respected.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). It's frustrating if you don't have time to do what you love. But don't wait until you've got large blocks of hours to devote to your passion. Steal the moments you do have. You'll be amazed what 20 minutes can bring.

Creators Syndicate

Joyce Jillson



Calvin and Hobbes

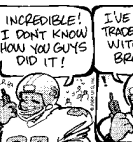
OH, GREAT ALTAR OF PASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT.



BESTION UPON ME, THY DISGRACED IMAGES AT SUCH SPEED AS TO RENDER LINGERING THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE!



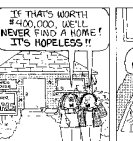
Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



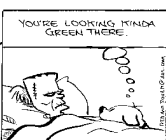
Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red and Rover



Better or Worse



To our readers

For the past decade, this column has been written by Joyce Jillson and Holiday Mathis. Ms. Jillson passed away on Oct. 1. Because Ms. Jillson and Ms. Mathis wrote in advance, columns they prepared will run through Nov. 6. Beginning Nov. 7, the horoscopes will be re-named "Horoscopes by Holiday" and will be authored by Ms. Mathis.

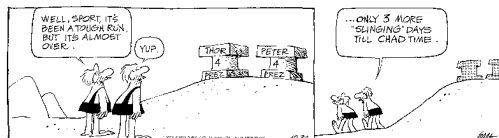
Peanuts



Fox Trot



B.C.



Baby Blues



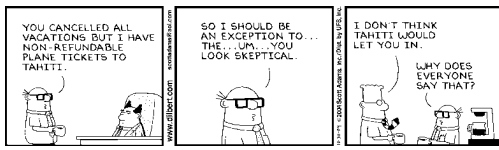
Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



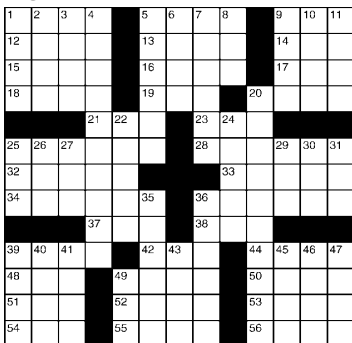
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Washington newspaper
- 5 Seethe
- 9 Emeril's expletive
- 12 Oppositionist
- 13 Cube maker
- 15 Rubik
- 14 Rage
- 15 Block
- 16 Re planes
- 17 Maui memento
- 18 Work at the keyboard
- 19 Whisper sweet nothings
- 20 Family
- 21 Platonic P
- 23 "I — Rock"
- 25 "Origin of Species" man
- 28 I may be this!
- 32 Gibson garnish
- 33 Wicker material
- 34 Straight man
- 36 Blood-line?
- 37 Hideaway
- 38 Work with
- 39 Commotion
- 42 "Little Women" woman
- 44 Turn the steering wheel hard
- 48 Nipper's co.
- 49 Swain
- 50 Big name in scat
- 51 Right angle

Down

- 1 Treaty
- 2 Sans siblings
- 3 Put an end to
- 4 Links champ
- 5 Interlock-house
- 6 Hydrox competitor
- 7 Advance
- 8 Privy
- 9 Chelsea's pop
- 10 Neighborhood
- 11 Chow —
- 12 "Peace Train" singer
- 22 Depend (on)
- 24 "Wuthering Heights" terrain
- 25 PC system
- 26 Picnic pest
- 27 Hope/Crosby destination
- 29 Reason for "sudden death"
- 30 Eternally, in verse
- 31 Desiccate
- 35 Become interlocked
- 36 Omen
- 37 Release
- 40 Bruins' home
- 41 Piquancy
- 43 Relaxation
- 45 Verve
- 46 Exile isle
- 47 Grate
- 49 However

Answer to Previous Puzzle



10-30

CRYPTOQUIP

YAK CHHG MADTLXLTY,
TYFGDLEC YAK MKVLHGLX
YPOWK, IFTY VKPWNW OK

LE ALT KWKIKEY.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU FULLY SUPPORT CHOCOLATE CANDY, I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY YOU'RE BEHIND BARS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals O

Not-so-public access

IN INDIANAPOLIS — Government officials routinely broke or skirted Indiana's open records law, which makes public records available to anyone, a review by eight newspapers found.

Reporters presenting themselves as citizens visited government offices in all 92 counties to see how readily officials turned over such records.

Results were better than a similar audit seven years ago, and some journalists obtained public records easily. But others were intimidated, questioned repeatedly, put off for days or mistakenly told they needed a court order or subpoena.

Rush County Sheriff Jim Owens threatened to jail a reporter if he continued to "intimidate my staff," the review found.

Reporters and editors in August tried to obtain 368 public records from crime logs and reports, public employee salaries and court files of sex offenders. Only 11 counties granted all four documents within 24 hours.

Who's in charge?

DC WASHINGTON — More than three years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, local officials in the nation's capital do not know what might lead the federal government to take control of public safety efforts in a future emergency.

"It's been unclear since 9/11 and we've been talking about it since then," District of Columbia Mayor Anthony A. Williams said.

Williams was among officials who testified at a D.C. Council Judiciary Committee hearing into command and other jurisdictional issues stemming from the district's huge federal presence.

With more than 1,250 federal office buildings and 175 foreign diplomatic missions located in the district and its nearby suburbs, several local jurisdictions could have their response plans subordinated to federal control.

"There has got to be a level of understanding about who's in charge," said Richard Ben-Veniste, a former member of the 9/11 Commission.

The panel, established by Congress and named by President Bush, was charged with examining the terrorist attacks and making recommendations to Congress.

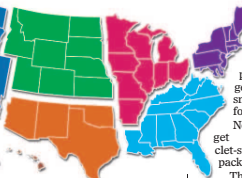
Return of Ms. Subways

NY NEW YORK — Miss, er, Ms. Subways rides again.

For the first time in 28 years, New York City's 220-mile underground rail network has a human face, that of Caroline Sanchez-Bernat. The 29-year-old actress edged out three other contenders for the title of Ms. Subways, a promotion revived for the transit system's centennial celebration this week.

Sanchez-Bernat was crowned Ms. er, Miss America-style with a tiara and sash at Ellen's Stardust Dinner, owned by Ellen Hart Strum, a 1959 Miss Subways.

The new winner's photo will be posted in the subway, just as were those of the 300-plus women who



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

held the title between 1941 and 1976.

Chemical weapons charge

TN JACKSON — A man who authorities say hated the federal government was charged with attempting to acquire chemical weapons, explosives and weapons of mass destruction with the intent to attack official buildings.

Demetrius "Van" Crocker, 39, was characterized by U.S. Attorney Terrell Harris as having "hated for the government, and anti-Semitic and racist views." Crocker is accused of attempting to obtain sarin nerve gas and C-4 explosives, according to a federal complaint filed.

Crocker was arrested Monday after an undercover federal agent met him to deliver fake explosives and what Crocker believed were ingredients for sarin, considered one of the world's deadliest chemical agents.

New deer hunting gun

WI DEERBROOK — A deer hunter in Wisconsin is marketing a new type of chewing gum he claims can mask human-smelling breath and help hunters move closer to their prey.

Nell Brett says his Gum-o-Flage

helps fool the animals' hypersensitive noses to human scent.

Hunters already can use special soap, shampoo and clothing detergent to eliminate human smell. Some even pay \$300 for scent-control coveralls.

Now, for \$4.99, hunters can get 12 olive green, Chicle-style tablets in a blister pack.

The idea came seven years ago when Brett, a gun hunter since boyhood, began going after deer with a bow and arrow. That meant hunting at closer range, and Brett took precautions to eliminate his human odor, including wearing carbon-lined clothing that was kept sealed in plastic bins with pine boughs.

Deer still picked up his scent. He turned to his brother and then-distant student Nicholas, who suggested the problem might be his breath.

Murder-suicide probed

MA LOWELL — A Dracut husband allegedly shot and killed a man and seriously wounded his estranged wife before he committed suicide, investigators said.

Barry Strykowski, 48, apparently went to the Lowell home of his estranged wife, Diana Strykowski, shot her once, and shot her companion, Jaroslav Stepanec, several times, according to the Middlesex district attorney's office.

Investigators are treating the incident as a murder-suicide.

Strykowski was pronounced dead at the scene. He had a gun-shot wound to the head.

Diana Strykowski, 44, was being treated at Boston Medical Center. She is expected to survive, authorities said.

Stepanec, 51, was pronounced dead at Saints Memorial Medical Center in Lowell shortly after police arrived at the home, responding to a report of a possible fight.

Drive for five to vote

NM ALBUQUERQUE — The Southwest Voter Registration Project has cooked up a good idea to drive young Hispanic and American Indian voters to the polls this Election Day.

Get five people to vote, win a shot at a car.

"We're not rewarding voters, we're rewarding volunteers who get voters to the polls with a chance to win. So far, it seems to be getting attention," Southwest Voter president Antonio Gonzalez said of the "Take 5 and Drive" giveaway.

The contest — sponsored by Southwest Voter in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Nevada — gives volunteers who take five friends or family members to the polls a chance to win a 2005 Ford Mustang.

An estimated 20,000 brochures in New Mexico were sent out advertising the giveaway, and the contest Web site already had more than 20,000 hits.

Gonzalez said the names of voters submitted in the contest will be confirmed after the election by checking voter logs and making phone calls. Both political parties aren't complaining.



Moon over Massachusetts

Mount Holyoke in Hadley, Mass.

The moon rises above the Summit House atop



Frozen jack-o'-lantern

Some Halloween decorations in Truckee, Calif., are shown with a coating of snow. A powerful Alaskan storm swept across California this week, flooding homes in San Francisco, cutting power to thousands and leading to a record-breaking snowfall in the Sierra.



Fall foliage

church in East Bridgewater, Mass.

The orange leaves of a maple tree stand out against the white clapboard steeple of a



Hanging on

Ripe tomatoes are seen in a field in Camarillo, Calif. The winterlike storm that drenched California fields last week hurt the tomato harvest and contributed to a mounting national shortage that has doubled prices at many stores.



Overdue visit The USS Constellation shoots confetti as it departs the Baltimore harbor for a visit to the U.S. Naval Academy. The historic voyage marks the first time the USS Constellation has traveled beyond the Key Bridge since arriving in Baltimore in 1955 and her first return to the Naval Academy in more than 110 years.



Hose down Bristol firefighters battle a house fire at 48 Oakland Street in Bristol, Conn.



Stylish pups Cody, a terrier, left, and Casey, a shitzu, model outfits by E&E Hallstrom Haute Couture, a high-end clothing company for dogs in Hartsdale, N.Y.



Still on the line Pacific Gas & Electric workers spend time working on the power lines in Bakersfield, Calif., as the clouds started to move in before a rain storm hit.

Actor arrested in beating

NY SOUTHAMPTON — An actor playing a stressed-out soldier in a local stage production was arrested after he punched his leading lady in the face and then beat up the director backstage just before a scheduled performance, police said.

Witnesses told police that Brian Raber, 27, appeared to be playing his character when he began to hit the 17-year-old actress, who was hospitalized in serious but stable condition.

Raber was ordered held on \$100,000 bail at his arraignment on two counts of assault in the attacks at the theater on Long Island. He has pleaded not guilty.

Witnesses told police that Raber, who had starred for several weeks in "Home Front," about a soldier coming home from war, punched Bianca Massi for no apparent reason at the Historical Society Playhouse.

Police said the director, Toni Munna, 51, was beaten when she stepped in to help Massi, who suffered a fractured cheek and eye socket. Munna was treated for facial bruises.

Catholic Charities CEO

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Catholic Charities USA named the Rev. Larry Snyder, executive director of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, as the national organization's next president and chief executive officer.

"I feel extremely gratified to have been tapped for this position, especially for such an accomplished and highly esteemed organization," Snyder said in a statement. Snyder will start the new job Feb. 1.

Snyder will replace the Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, who served as president of the group from September 2001 until December 2003, when he returned to Boston for a job in the archdiocese there.

Catholic Charities USA, based in Alexandria, Va., is a national network of more than 1,400 Catholic Charities agencies.

Train derail

MI DETROIT — A train carrying a flammable liquid derailed in a residential neighborhood, and hundreds of people were evacuated along with three schools, officials said. There were no reports of injuries or illness.

Nine of the CN freight train's cars left the tracks and some overturned, authorities said.

Four of the nine derailed tank cars contained methanol, which is used as an antifreeze and is flammable. Some liquid reportedly leaked from the train, but fire officials described the leak as minimal.

CN spokeswoman Gloria Combe said the leak was quickly contained. The cause had not been determined.

About 1,500 students were evacuated from three schools. By late Monday, all evacuated residents were allowed back in their homes, Combe said.

Students succeeding

SC WEST COLUMBIA — More than three-fourths of high school sophomores passed the South Carolina's new and more rigorous exit exam on their first

try. Education Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum announced the results for 47,338 students who took the tests this past spring, measuring skills in English, reading and math. The old exam was based on an eighth-grade level of education.

Bat study funded

TN KNOXVILLE — The University of Tennessee has received nearly \$4 million to study bats.

The National Science Foundation grant will enable scientists to conduct two studies, one on the benefits bats have on agriculture and the other on rabies in bats in the wild.

Seal deaths puzzling

ME PORTLAND — Scientists investigating high mortality rates of seals say no fast answer has emerged.

Reports of stranded seals have slowed to normal rates in recent weeks, but researchers continue to search for clues about what happened to the harbor seals last summer in Maine.

"We're peeling the onion, but we're still finding more layers," said Greg Early, a Massachusetts researcher and one of the leaders of the federal team investigating Maine's seal deaths.

The mystery began in July with a surge of calls to the Northeast Marine Animal Lifeline. The Westbrook-based network rescues sick or injured seals, tests and examines them and nurses the animals back to health. The calls continued at an unprecedented pace through August, says Greg Jakush, founder of the lifeline.

"We're at case 766 right now for the year," Jakush said. "Our average is 350 to 375 per year."

Electronics recycle, too

DC WASHINGTON — The city's public works department staged a semiannual electronics recycling event in Rock Creek Park.

Residents of the district, northern Virginia and suburban Maryland brought obsolete computers, televisions and stereo equipment. The event was aimed at preventing the items from being discarded with regular solid waste and sent to landfills.

Plans for city park

NY NEW YORK — Union Square Park, which has undergone a series of renovations recently after suffering years of neglect, will undergo more improvements starting next autumn, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said.

The \$14 million redesign, which will focus on the north side of the 165-year-old park, will expand the park's two existing playgrounds into a single playground; introduce a year-round restaurant to replace a seasonal outdoor restaurant; and refurbish the plaza that holds the Union Square farmer's market.

The farmers market will remain open during construction. The project will be the final phase of the reconstruction of the park. The southern portion of the park was rebuilt in 1986, and the southwest portion was renovated in 2002.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

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Increase benefits for reserves

I've seen a few articles and letters to the editor about the differences between active-duty and reserve component soldiers. When I enlisted in the military, I had no desire to be a member of the active-duty force. My spouse had a stable job, we had a large family and owned our own home. So, joining the National Guard gave me the opportunity to serve my state and my country part time in the military, while knowing there was always the possibility of being called to active duty if additional forces were needed.

I am proud to be doing that right now. Hundreds of thousands of reserve component soldiers have been called to active duty since Sept. 11, 2001. Many of us are serving in a combat zone for 12 months, along with the active-duty soldiers.

But if nothing changes to decrease our deployment lengths, increase benefits for those who are active-duty soldiers (for example, college benefits), treatment of injured soldiers (near their homes, with pay), etc., the military will lose a large number of soldiers from the reserve component.

Be thankful that people like us are ready and willing to be called on when we are needed. But if you want us to do what the active-duty soldiers do, you should give what the active-duty soldier gets. I don't think that's asking too much.

Sgt. Christy Neo
Camp Anacosta, Iraq

All fighters deserve praise

I would like to comment on remarks made by Secretary of State Colin Powell regarding the unfortunate death of Edward Setz in the Oct. 26 article "Baghdad rocket attack kills U.S. diplomat."

Where do we draw the line of who is important to American people and who is not? Soldiers die every day here in Iraq, but nothing is ever mentioned of the statements of condolences their families have received. Powell commented that "Ed was a brave American, dedicated to his country and to a brighter future for the people of Iraq." I was appalled by his flagrant disregard for the rest of the soldiers fighting for America, especially since Powell was a general in the U.S. Army.

I would like to commend all the service-members in the military, the Department of

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the Army and Department of Defense civilians, as well as soldiers from other supporting countries. Your work and efforts are not in vain. We are all here, and are all dedicated to a brighter future for Iraq.

I would also like to offer my condolences to all the families of the soldiers and volunteers who have lost their lives, fighting for what they believe.

Sgt. Jared A. Scott
South Victory Base, Iraq

Another point for shorter tours

I totally agree with the writer of the Oct. 23 letter "Shorter tours good idea." He made some very good, valid points. But I would like to add other points.

In a yearlong deployment, you are going to normally be deployed for more than a year. For active-duty soldiers, this is just a different duty station. But for Reserve and National Guard soldiers, this is taking them away from a life of being a civilian. Yes, they have an obligation to the military, but they also have an obligation to another employer, a civilian employer.

A long deployment is asking a lot of these employees, even though they understand

and support that their citizen-soldier must do this. It still can be a large burden on them. And even though the law states that the citizen-soldier must get his job back when he returns to his civilian life, there are still loopholes that might prevent it from happening.

So, for the benefit of all, I say yes to shorter tours.

Staff Sgt. Craig Herbert
Camp Beauriving, Kuwait

Touched by an angel

Recently as I was flying to Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, en route back to Afghanistan after two weeks of well-deserved rest, I was touched on my right arm. Sitting directly behind and across from me in seat 27C was the young woman who had touched me on my arm, just below the American flag sewn onto my desert camouflage uniform.

She leaned over and said, "Thank you for what you are doing." I turned, and thanked her for her support.

Then she said that her husband was deployed to Afghanistan, and I replied that it was where I was going. I asked her husband's name and the unit to which he was assigned in Afghanistan.

She said that her husband was killed in Afghanistan. She said that she had just cleared government quarters and was returning home to Texas to be with family. I told her that I was very sorry for her loss. I added that the hearts and prayers of all of those in the armed services who wear the uniform go out to her and her family. She thanked me.

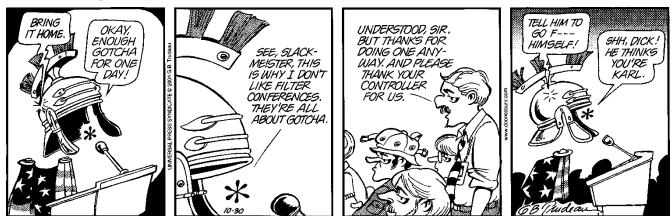
Sitting beside her was her young son, Justin Robert - who could be no more than 7 years old. Again I said, "I'm sorry for your loss, thank you for your support."

Sometimes we forget or take for granted the spirit and the impact of this uniform on those innocent victims who no longer have their loved ones to tell them, "Thank you for your support." Let us not forget that, as the torch carriers of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, that we are forever indebted to them.

That day, I was reminded when the widow of a fallen comrade touched me. What an angel.

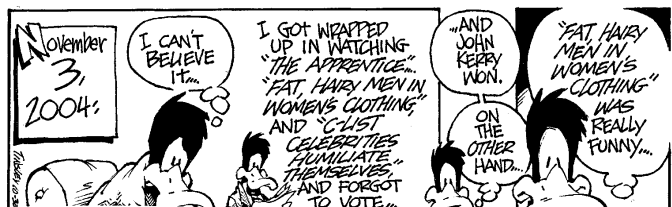
1st Sgt. John A. Gory
Kandahar, Afghanistan

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



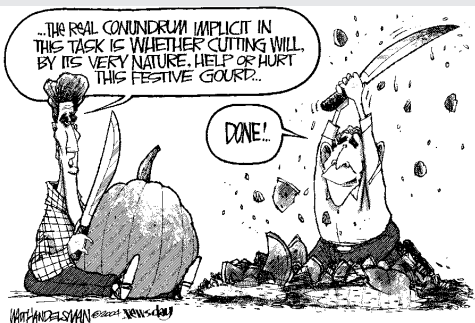
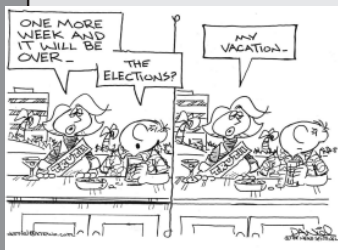
Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Looking at the news

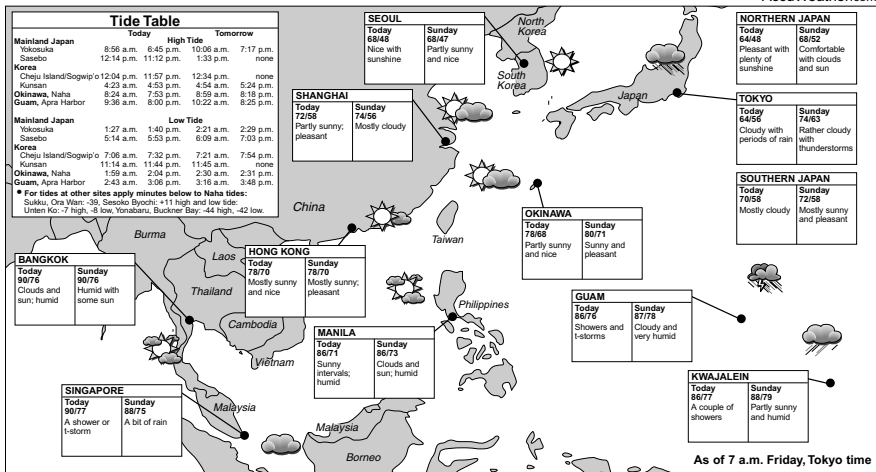
A weekly sampling of U.S. editorial cartoons



The Pacific Forecast

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Extended Forecasts

TOKYO Monday: Rain, high 72, low 61. Tuesday: Showers, high 70, low 60.	KADENA Monday: Partly sunny, high 80, low 71. Tuesday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 79, low 70.	SEoul Monday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 65, low 39. Tuesday: Rain, high 60, low 40.	MANILA Monday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 86, low 71. Tuesday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 85, low 71.	HAGATNA Monday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 88, low 78. Tuesday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 88, low 78.
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Thursday's USA Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Albuquerque	69/43	Los Angeles	66/50
Amarillo	81/53	Little Rock	83/66
Anchorage	42/31	Louisville	72/63
Ashville	68/55	Miami	85/71
Baltimore	62/45	Milwaukee	57/55
Birmingham	81/65	Nashville	76/64
Bismarck	62/46	New York	58/46
Boise	53/36	Omaha	77/60
Boston	53/41	Orlando	85/64
Brownsville	91/74	Philadelphia	61/45
Buffalo	57/44	Phoenix	70/52
Burlington	49/31	Pittsburgh	64/48
Charleston, SC	72/58	Portland, OR	54/46
Charlotte	64/56	Portland, ME	53/30
Cleveland	66/52	Salt Lake City	52/38
Columbus, OH	68/56	St. Louis	75/65
Delaware	54/50	San Antonio	88/75
El Paso	78/54	San Diego	64/54
Hartford	62/75	San Juan	85/68
Helena	47/30	Tampa	85/68
Indianapolis	68/59	Tulsa	83/69
Jacksville	81/64	Washington	64/50
Kansas City	77/66	Wichita	81/61

Saturday, October 30



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BCS field offers
from other networks

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Bowl Championship Series could have a new television home for the 2006 season.

ABC has had the broadcast rights to the BCS since 1998, when the system for crowning a college football champion was formed by the Big East, Big 12, Big Ten, Southeastern Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference and Pac-10.

The current contract runs out after the 2005 season.

ABC and the BCS have been negotiating a new contract since September, but have been unable to a get deal done. When the exclusive negotiation period ends next week, BCS officials will open the bidding to other networks.

"We're looking at quite a number of alternatives next week, and there's a good level of interest," Kevin O'Malley, television and marketing consultant to the BCS, said Wednesday.

Talks between the BCS and ABC are still alive, though.

"They're still want to be very much in the mix," O'Malley said. "We want to have them in the mix."

The coordinator and Big 12 Commissioner, Kevin Weiberg said, "All of our options remain open to us, including reaching an agreement with ABC."

O'Malley and Weiberg decided to identify the other networks interested in acquiring the rights.

Spurrier return hardly
done deal at Florida

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — All the trophies Steve Spurrier brought to Florida still line the hallways inside Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

Six Southeastern Conference championships, two Heismans and a national title.

Spurrier's legacy remains — and it always will.

He gave the program its first Heisman Trophy in 1966, its first SEC title in 1991 and its only national championship in 1996. He coached the Gators to 122 victories over 12 seasons, tornated opponents with his offensive flair and witty one-liners, and left town with the best winning percentage in league history.

So if Spurrier wants to coach at Florida again, is there anything that would prevent his return? Maybe.

"Everybody thinks it's a done deal. It's not a done deal. It's not a slam dunk," said Tommy Donahoe, president of Gainesville, Fla., which raises money for the school's athletic programs.

"Spurrier can't just ask for the job and get it. There's certainly a contingency out there that wants him back, but there also are people up with some of the things he did before."

For everything Spurrier would seemingly return to Gainesville — credibility, victories and championships — he also brings some baggage.

Many fans are still upset over the way Spurrier left Florida. He called athletic director Jeremy Foley from his beach house and

College
football
briefs

dropped the news in the middle of the recruiting season.

His recruiting dropped the last few years — he admitted he left the "cupboard somewhat bare" — and he wanted to limit the number of stops he made on the annual tour of "Gator Clubs."

Speculation about his return has even prompted concerns about his age (he is 59 older than ideal) and his motivation (will he leave again for the NFL?).

Would players, fans, boosters, Florida and school president Bernie Machen be willing to take potential problems for the chance to restore the Gators to the national elite? Would they be silly not to? "It was hard for coach Zeigler to replace 'The Legend,'" center Mike Degory said. "And if 'The Legend' wants to come back, it's going to answer a lot of questions."

There's also Spurrier's relationship with school administrators to consider, and his lack of one with Machen.

As for Spurrier and Foley, the AD says the relationship hasn't soured.

Steve Spurrier and I were friends before he was the head football coach at the University of Florida, we're friends today and we'll be friends for a long time," said "Did we always see eye to eye and stuff? No, but our friendship has never been better."

Hawaii's Owens a semifinalist
for Bletnikoff Award

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Hawaii's Chad Owens, Oklahoma's Matt Jurgens and St. Louis' Mike Smith from the Big Ten topped a list of semifinalists announced Thursday for the Bletnikoff Award, symbolic of college football's best receiver.

The Big Ten players are Michigan's Braylon Edwards, Ohio State's Santonio Holmes and Purdue's Taylor Mays. St. Louis' Mike Smith, one of the candidates for the honor, named after Oakland Raider and Florida State great Fred Bletnikoff, include David Anderson, Colorado State; Derek Hagan, Arizona State; Chris Henry, West Virginia; Earvin Johnson, UNLV; Dante Riddick, Stanford; and South Carolina's Troy Williamson.

Ridgeway's 63 catches for 831 yards were the best numbers among the candidates heading into this weekend's games, while Stubblefield's 11 touchdown catches leads in that category.

The 10 finalists will be unveiled Nov. 15 and the winner will be announced in December during the annual ESPN awards show at Walt Disney World and then February in a banquet at Tallahassee.

A panel of writers and broadcasters and a handful of former receivers, including Bletnikoff, make up the panel selected by the Tallahassee Quarterback Club Foundation, which sponsors the award.

Purpleburg's Larry Fitzgerald, now a rookie with the NFL's Arizona Cardinals, won the 2003 award.

STANDARD ISSUE
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Utah's mountainous task

Utes' quest for perfection faces obstacles in Mtn. West

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
The Associated Press

Utah will be a big favorite in its last four games against Mountain West Conference opponents, starting Saturday at San Diego State.

Still, it might not be as easy as it looks for the Utes (7-0) to finish the regular season unbeaten.

Familiarity, home-field advantage and emotion could all help derail Utah's hopes of becoming the first team from a non-BCS conference to participate in the Bowl Championship Series.

The Utes would guarantee themselves a spot in one of the four marquee bowl games and more than \$14 million by finishing in the top six in the BCS standings. They moved into sixth place this week, a spot that will be tough to hold even if they do beat San Diego State, Colorado State, Wyoming and BYU.

The Aztecs, Rams, Cowboys and Cougars will want to be a spoiler.

Also, they all faced Utah last season, so coach Urban Meyer's diverse effort, led by quarterback Alex Smith, isn't going to catch them off guard.

Plus, the conference title race isn't over. Colorado State and BYU each has only one MWC loss and could still be in the running for a championship when they face the Utes.

Remember last year? TCU's BCS dreams were ended by Southern Mississippi, which ended up winning the Conference USA title.

The Utes do catch a break by getting the Rams and Cougars at home. They play at Wyoming and San Diego State.

But while San Diego State (2-5, 0-3) has been a disappointment, the Aztecs' defense was good enough to give Michigan fits this year. And the Cowboys (4-3, 1-2) beat Mississippi at Laramie in September.

"Anything can happen. For me, I'm not too familiar with the rankings," Utah offensive lineman Tavo Tupola said. "I'm just worried about my assignments. That's a tough responsibility as it is."

The picks:

Saturday

No. 1 Southern Cal (minus 24) at Washington State: Trojans have been ranked in top 10 for 26 straight games. **USC 37-10**

No. 2 Oklahoma (minus 12) at No. 20 Oklahoma State: First of two straight tough road games for Sooners. **OKLAHOMA 33-24**.

No. 3 Auburn (minus 18) at Mississippi: Tigers won't let it slip



Utah quarterback Alex Smith will face the top-ranked defense in the Mountain West Conference when the Utes play at San Diego State on Saturday. After this weekend, Utah's remaining regular-season games are against Colorado State, Wyoming and Brigham Young.

away against Rebels this time ... **AUBURN 35-13**

No. 4 Miami (minus 21½) at North Carolina: Canes could simply pound Tar Heels ... **MIAMI 48-20**.

No. 5 Florida State (minus 10½) at Maryland: Lions' swarming defense vs. Terps' inept offense ... **FLORIDA STATE 35-3**

No. 7 California (minus 15½) vs. No. 20 Arizona State: Cal has scored 106 in two straight victories over Sun Devils ... **CALIFORNIA 47-24**.

No. 8 Texas (minus 14) at Colorado: Buffs have found defense in Big 12 ... **TEXAS 37-17**.

No. 9 Utah (minus 18½) at San Diego State: Aztecs have No. 1 defense in MWC ... **UTAH 26-13**.

No. 10 Tennessee (pick) at South Carolina: Gamecocks help Georgia Tech SEC East race ... **SOUTH CAROLINA 20-16**.

Michigan State (plus 11) at No. 12 Michigan: Spartans QB Drew Stanton is fifth in Big 10 in rushing ... **MICHIGAN 24-17**.

No. 15 West Virginia (minus 14½) at Rutgers: Mountaineers rolling through Big East to BCS bowl ... **WEST VIRGINIA 37-18**.

No. 16 Texas A&M (minus 24) at Baylor: Aggies gearing up for Sooners ... **TEXAS A&M 37-0**.

No. 17 Purdue (minus 9½) at Northwestern: Boilermakers could be sluggish after two straight losses ... **PURDUE 25-20**.

Vanderbilt (plus 24) at No. 19 LSU: Fighting Gators since 1997 ... **LSU 42-13**.

No. 20 Illinois (minus 11) at Illinois: Illini have lost 13 straight Big Ten games ... **IOWA 27-10**.

No. 24 Minnesota (minus 17½) at Indiana: Gophers eat up bad teams ... **MINNESOTA 44-14**.

Last week: 1-94 (straight); 15-7-1 (vs. points).
Season: 123-30 (straight); 76-67-3 (vs. points).

College football schedule/statistics

Weekend schedule

Saturday, Oct. 30

EAST	
Princeton at Cornell	
Richmond at Hofstra	
Villanova at Rhode Island	
West Virginia at Rutgers	
Harvard at Dartmouth	
New Hampshire at Northeastern	
Wagner at Albany, N.Y.	
Georgetown, D.C. at Fordham	
Bucknell at Holy Cross	
Colgate at Lehigh	
Maine at Massachusetts	
Cent. Connecticut St. at Monmouth, N.J.	
Brown at Penn	
Columbia at Yale	
Marist at Duquesne	
Delaware at Navy	
St. Peter's at Robert Morris	
Connecticut at Syracuse	
Sacred Heart at Stony Brook	
William & Mary at Virginia	
SOUTH	
Duke at Wake Forest	
Webster International at Jacksonville	
Tennessee at South Carolina	
S. Carolina St. at Delaware St.	
S. Dakota St. at Georgia Southern	
N. Carolina St. at Howard	
Francis, Pa. at Morehead St.	
Coastal Carolina at Gardner-Webb	
Charleston Southern at Auburn	
Allen at Savannah St.	
The Citadel at Wofford	
Charleston, W.Va. at Austin Peay	
W. Carolina at Elon	
UCF at Marshall	
Kentucky at Mississippi St.	
Murray St. at E. Kentucky	
Army at East Carolina	
VMI at James Madison	
Parkville Univ. at MWSU	
Utah St. at Middle Tennessee	
Tennessee Tech at Samford	
Florida vs. Georgia at Jacksonville, Fla.	
Florida St. at Maryland	
Idaho at Troy	
Alabama vs. Alabama St. at Birmingham, Ala.	
Florida Atlantic at Florida A&M	
Bethune-Cookman at N. Carolina A&T	
Appalachian St. at Chattanooga	
Miami at North Carolina	
Alcorn St. at SE Louisiana	
Texas College at Southern U.	
Auburn at Mississippi	
Vanderbilt at LSU	
Texas State at McNeese St.	
Florida vs. at W. Kentucky	

MIDWEST

Iowa at Illinois	
Purdue at Northwestern	
Penn St. at Ohio St.	
W. Michigan at Cent. Michigan	
San Diego at Butler	
Minnesota at Indiana	
Kansas at Iowa	
Northwestern St. at N. Dakota St.	
Tenn.-Martin at SE Missouri	
Tennessee St. at E. Illinois St.	
TCU at Cincinnati	
South Carolina St. at Michigan	
Idaho at N. Kentucky	
Indiana St. at Youngstown St.	
N. Illinois at Ball St.	
SW Miss. at N. Iowa	
Illinois at Bowling Green	
Texas Tech at Kansas St.	
W. Illinois at S. Illinois	

SOUTHWEST

Oklahoma at Oklahoma State	
San Houston St. at Stephen F. Austin	
Rice at Tulsa	
Jackson St. at Ark.-Pine Bluff	
Tulane at Houston	
Texas A&M at Baylor	
Louisiana-Monroe at North Texas	
Grambling St. at Texas Southern	
FAR WEST	
San Francisco at Colorado St.	
Utah at Wyoming	
Arizona St. at California	
Utah State at Fresno St.	
Washington at Oregon	
Stanford at UCLA	
Sacramento St. at Washington	
Marquette, Minn. at Montana	
UTEP at San Jose St.	
San Diego St. at Washington St.	
Oregon St. at Arizona	
Southern Western St. at Washington St.	
Idaho State at New Mexico St.	
Idaho at San Diego St.	
UC Davis at Cal Poly-SLO	
San Jose St. at Arizona, 9 p.m.	
Utah at San Diego St.	
SMU at Fresno St.	

Division I-A statistics

Total offense

Team	Plays	Yds	Pts
California	350	526	4
Louisville	460	309	50.5
Texas Tech	390	475	46.4
Utah	504	342	48.8
Boise St.	572	372	47.7
Toledo	585	384	48.4
Minnesota	562	337	47.1
Virginia	499	328	46.4
Bowling Green	582	354	46.9
North Carolina	521	320	45.7
Illinois	505	345	45.6
Purdue	507	375	45.3
Texas A&M	489	451	3
Texas	503	314	44.9
Oregon	544	314	44.1

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Rushing offense

Team	Plays	Yds	Pts
Rice	351	227	27.8
Texas	387	211	26.7
Missouri	387	227	27.8
Oklahoma St.	343	211	26.7
Navy	394	181	25.4

Air Force	399	1749	249.9
Virginia	330	1743	249.0
California	252	1473	245.5
Utah	315	1461	241.1
Louisville	275	1370	228.3
Alabama	360	1686	226.0
Northwestern	368	1772	257.7
Oklahoma	314	1517	219.6
UCLA	280	1496	213.7

Passing offense

Team	Att	Cmp	Yds	Pts
Texas Tech	406	240	424	43.4
Hawaii	302	174	2084	34.7
Toledo	273	169	2097	32.4
Bowling Green	326	159	209	32.0
Purdue	256	153	2204	31.4
Oregon St.	321	166	2034	29.6
Michigan	264	150	2061	29.4
Rutgers	276	154	2034	29.6
Fla. Atlantic	199	120	1725	28.7
Arizona	229	126	2064	28.4
Brigham Young	305	178	2284	28.0
Boise St.	272	162	2107	27.7
TCU	235	137	1954	28.6
Miami (Ohio)	229	167	2239	27.9
Oregon	259	161	1951	27.8

Total defense

Team	Plays	Yds	Pts
Alabama	457	714	22.1
North Carolina St.	438	1638	23.4
Wisconsin	489	1801	22.6
Arizona	467	1549	23.1
LSU	441	1743	25.1
Georgia	481	1837	26.4
Virginia Tech	445	1858	26.7
California	384	1613	26.8
South Carolina	466	1889	26.8
Michigan	506	2025	27.6
Nebraska	466	1946	27.6
Louisville	368	1679	28.3
Missouri	466	1974	28.4

Rushing defense

Team	Plays	Yds	Pts
Boise St.	118	480	51.3
Florida St.	226	481	68.7
Michigan	256	573	71.1
Iowa	250	574	72.0
Oklahoma	213	535	76.4
Georgia	217	577	82.4
California	201	516	86.1
Wisconsin	249	613	89.1
Troy	272	655	93.6
Purdue	228	580	96.0
Auburn	265	708	96.6
Louisville	270	693	98.0
Nebraska	240	695	99.3
Notre Dame	276	699	99.9
Boston College	237	701	100.1

Passing defense

Team	Att	Cmp	Yds	Tds	Pts
Alabama	171	85	1047	10	56.1
Wisconsin	250	119	1178	14	88.46
South Carolina	225	118	1176	3	90.97
Fresno St.	199	113	1067	9	56.10
Virginia Tech	190	101	1062	4	96.93
Arizona	219	113	1212	10	85.10
UTEP	264	128	1572	9	95.50
Auburn	202	107	1200	6	89.00
Utah	202	107	1251	2	100.34
Southwestern	176	93	1003	1	100.08
Miami (Fla.)	176	83	1037	1	100.08
North Carolina Tech	176	83	1037	1	100.08
South Carolina	214	133	1312	5	100.70
Missouri	171	94	1023	6	101.63

Div. I-A individual statistics

Rushing

Team	Car	Yds	Avg	TDs
Thomas, Mo. Texas	158	1156	7.3	16
Benson, Texas Tech	157	1156	7.3	16
Johnson, Texas Tech	157	1156	7.3	16
Arrington, Cal	128	918	7.2	15
Johnson, Cal Tech	128	918	7.2	15
Peterson, Oklahoma	127	1023	8.0	14
Williams, Memphis	102	941	9.2	13.4
Wright, Oklahoma	102	941	9.2	13.4
Sporles, Kansas St.	170	853	5.0	12.9
Worfe, Mo. Illinois	145	853	5.9	12.9
Dorsey, Utah	153	945	6.2	11.8
Maroney, Minnesota	149	945	6.3	11.8
Hunter, Michigan	187	936	5.0	10.7
Schroeder, C. Michigan	150	936	6.2	10.7
Drew, UCLA	120	787	6.6	11.24

Passing

Team	Att	Cmp	Yds	Tds	Pts
Lefors, Louisville	148	111	1376	14	178.9
Rodgers, Cal	148	111	1376	14	178.9
Moore, Michigan	148	111	1376	14	178.9
Gradowski, Toledo	151	111	1386	15	184.1
Uhl, Utah	151	111	1386	15	184.1
Huckaby, Utah	189	102	1776	18	166.1
Jacobs, BowGreen	257	176	2020	20	184.5
Carter, Air Force	129	71	1296	10	145.1
Orcutt, Purdue	216	138	2090	20	184.5
White, Oklahoma	199	137	1972	15	184.5
Hogans, Virginia	147	99	1372	6	156.5
Marshall, W. Virginia	126	75	1047	15	184.5
Roberts, San Jose St.	98	76	937	9	115.5
Zatarynski, Boise St.	200	129	1893	11	150.4
Leak, Florida	227	138	1831	17	148.0

Receiving

	Gms	Ct	Yds	Ct P
Ridgeway, Ball State	8	67	896	8.4
Bernal-Wood, Idaho	8	67	896	8.4
Owens, Hawaii	6	47	516	7.8
Moses, Rutgers	5	54	575	7.7
Wright, Middle Tenn.	7	54	719	7.7
Glover, Texas Tech	7	52	567	7.4
Hass, Oregon St.	7	51	798	7.3
Edwards, Michigan	8	58	806	7.3
Philmore, Northwestern	7	50	574	7.1
Flowers, Nevada	8	57	750	7.1
Webb, San Diego St.	7	49	594	7.0
Deslaurie, E. Michigan	7	49	755	7.0
Dowery, Kent State	6	42	362	7.0
Moore, Toledo	8	56	663	6.9
Hicks, Texas Tech	7	48	894	6.9

RACING STRIPES

A WEEKLY LOOK AT MOTORSPORTS

Air NASCAR

Hendrick tragedy shows risks inherent to racing aren't just at the track

By MIKE HARRIS
The Associated Press

A fleet of private planes known as the "NASCAR Air Force" has made travel easier for drivers and teams. But Sunday's crash that killed 10 people flying to a race aboard a Hendrick Motorsports team plane showed such convenience also can involve risks.

"We use planes just like our cars," said Ricky Rudd, one of several NASCAR Nextel Cup drivers who are also pilots. "We put a lot of time in the air and have some of the best pilots in the country that fly these things, and some of the best equipment."

The backbone of the NASCAR air fleet has been two-engine, 12-passenger aircraft like the Beech 200 King Air that crashed into the side of a mountain in thick fog Sunday while trying to land at a small airport near Martinsville Speedway in Virginia.

All aboard were killed, including team owner Rick Hendrick's son, Ricky, his brother, John, and John's two daughters, Jennifer and Kimberly. Also on the plane were the team's general manager, Jeff Turner, and its chief engine builder, Randy Dorton, as well as Joe Jackson, an executive with DuPont, Scott Latham, 38, a pilot for NASCAR driver Tony Stewart, and pilots Richard Tracy and Elizabeth Morrison.

For years, nearly everyone traveled by land and forth to the races in team vans or private cars, but the proliferation of private planes has changed that.

Nestle Cup teams race 38 weekends each year, including two all-star events. On many of those weekends, the Concord, N.C., Regional Airport — the closest airport for most teams — is buzzing with activity. More than 100 aircraft — helicopters and airplanes — take off and land, ferrying drivers, team owners, crewmen, sponsors and fans to airports near the racetrack.

More aircraft, including a pair of 727 jets owned by Ronch Racing, fly in and out of nearby Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

"Actually, it's not just race weekends," said Annette Privette, a spokeswoman for the city

Nestle Cup teams race 38 weekends each year, including two all-star events. On many of those weekends, the Concord, N.C., Regional Airport — the closest airport for most teams — is buzzing with activity.

of Concord. "Our airport has approximately 200 aircraft based there and about 60 percent of them are NASCAR-related. There's a lot of flying back and forth to testing and pole nights and driver appearances and races."

"It's convenient because the teams, obviously, want to spend as much time with their families



AP photos

Above, NASCAR driver Mark Martin pulls his jet out onto a runway in this 1998 photo. So many drivers have private planes that they're often called the "NASCAR Air Force." But the convenience of air travel isn't without risks, as shown by Sunday's crash that killed 10 people flying to a race aboard a Hendrick Motorsports team plane. An aerial view of the wreckage from that crash is shown at the bottom right.

as possible." Petty Enterprises driver Jeff Green sees private plane travel as more than just a convenience.

Taking the chance on being delayed in an airport just won't work," Green said. "You have to be there Friday morning for prac-

for your sponsors and your team — you just don't have much choice."

Mark Martin, another driver who is also a pilot, lost his father, stepmother and half sister in 1998 when a private plane his father was piloting crashed in Nevada. But Martin said he has no qualms about continuing to use his plane.

"I suppose we've been pretty lucky in a way," Martin said in an interview last year. "But everybody knows that flying is still safer than driving in your personal car. And we really have no choice. We have to fly to get our jobs done."

With the escalating use of helicopters — for short hauls — and private planes, NASCAR's Air Force has a very good safety record.

SEE AIR NASCAR ON PAGE 35



NASCAR NEXTEL CUP

Race 33: Bass Pro Shops MBNA 500, 1:30 a.m. Monday, AFN-Sports

Last race: Jimmie Johnson's win in the Subway 500 in Martinsville, Va., was marred by the news that a plane owned by his team, Hendrick Motorsports, crashed in thick fog on route to the race, killing all 10 people aboard, including the son, brother and two nieces of owner

Rick Hendrick. The Hendrick team also includes Jeff Gordon, Terry Labonte and Brian Vickers.

Last year: Jeff Gordon held off a strong challenge from Tony Stewart and won the Bass Pro Shops MBNA 500. The event was suspended one day because of rain.

DRIVERS TO WATCH

Dale Earnhardt Jr. who barely missed out on third place in the standings. He needs a good run to keep this a three-team race to the Cup title.

Jimmie Johnson who barely missed out on six wins at Atlanta in the standings. It is second only to Kurt Busch in points scored since the race. Only Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Bobby Labonte have more.

Bobby Labonte who barely missed out on six wins at Atlanta in the standings. It is second only to Kurt Busch in points scored since the race. Only Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Bobby Labonte have more.

Nestle Cup qualifying record
Geoffrey Bodine, 197.476 mph, 1997.

Nestle Cup race record
Bobby Labonte, 159.904 mph, Nov. 16, 1997.

FAST FACTS
Kurt Busch finished fifth at Martinsville and built his lead in the championship standings to 36 points over Jeff Gordon. ... Dale Earnhardt Jr. won at Concord 500 at Hampton on March 14. To driver has swept both races in Atlanta since Bill Elliott in 1992. ... Ryan Newman won his series-high seventh pole at Martinsville. ... None of the remaining championship contenders has an average finish better than 10th at Atlanta.

POINTS RACE

After 32 of 36 races

1. Kurt Busch 6,015
2. Jeff Gordon 5,919
3. Dale Earnhardt Jr. 5,890
4. Jimmie Johnson 5,808
5. Mark Martin 5,791
6. Tony Stewart 5,769
7. Elliott Sader 5,760
8. Matt Kenseth 5,755
9. Ryan Newman 5,749
10. Jeremy Mayfield 5,691
11. Jamie McMurray 4,053
12. Dale Jarrett 3,856
13. Kevin Harvick 3,809
14. Bobby Labonte 3,761
15. Casey Kube 3,755
16. Michael Waltrip 3,464
17. Jeff Burton 3,463
18. Rusty Wallace 3,428
19. Sterling Marlin 3,416
20. Greg Biffle 3,358

BUSCH SERIES

This week: Aaron's 312 at Hampton, Ga. (Tape-delayed, 4 p.m. Sunday, AFN-Sports).

Last race: Martin Truex Jr. extended his points lead by holding off Greg Biffle in a green-white-checkered restart and winning the Series at Town 250 at the Martinsville Motorsports Park. Truex, who has six wins this season, is now 286 points ahead of Kyle Busch.

Last year: Greg Biffle passed Michael Waltrip for the lead with 10 laps left to win the Aaron's 312.

Fast facts: Busch has not won since posting consecutive victories at Indianapolis and Michigan in August, a span of seven races. ... Mark Martin is expected to make his fourth Busch start of the season this weekend. He has three wins and six top-10 finishes in nine career appearances with the series at Atlanta.

Next race: BassPro Supermarkets 200, Nov. 6, Avondale, Ariz.

GRAFMAN TRUCK

Last race: Jamie McMurray, became the eighth driver in NASCAR history to win in the Cup series, the

Busch series and in a truck after taking the Kroger 200 in Martinsville, Va.

Next race: Chevy Silverado 150, Nov. 5, Avondale, Ariz.

CHAMP CARS

Last race: Bruno Junqueira spoiled his teammate's bid to clinch the championship by winning the Long-mach 100 in Australia. Sebastien Bourdais finished second and will take a 22-point lead over Junqueira into the season-ending race Nov. 7 in Mexico City.

Next race: Nov. 7, Mexico City.

FORMULA ONE

Last race: Juan Pablo Montoya won in his final race for Williams-BMW, beating future McLaren teammate Kimi Raikkonen in the Brazilian Grand Prix.

INDY RACING

Last race: Helio Castroneves picked up his first win in 39 races by taking the season-ending Chevy 500 at Texas Motor Speedway. Series champion Tony Kanaan finished second and became the first driver in any major series to complete every lap of a season.

Air NASCAR: Fast transit a way of life

AIR NASCAR, FROM PAGE 34

Driver Alan Kulwicki and the three others were killed in the crash of a private plane in 1993 while flying to a race in Bristol, Tenn.

Later that same year, Davey Allison died in the crash of his helicopter as he tried to land at Talladega Superspeedway.

There had been no aircraft-related fatalities in NASCAR since, but that doesn't mean there haven't been accidents.

In one three-week period in November 2003, Martin's plane blew two tires, taking off from a Goodyear, Ariz., airport after racing at Phoenix, a plane carrying Petty crewmen also blew a tire on takeoff after a test earlier in Phoenix, and driver Tony Stewart's plane hit a deer while landing to refuel at a rural Texas airport on the way to the Phoenix race. There were no injuries.

"Things happen but, in most cases, it's just a matter on being inconvenienced, having to wait for repairs or hitching a ride on somebody else's plane," Martin said. "There's still no substitute for the private planes."

There is, however, a substitute for the small planes.

Martin's team owner, Jack Roush, bought his 727s four years ago after starting to feel less and less comfortable about having up to 16 small planes in the air each race weekend.

"I have five teams and we'd have five small planes going to the track on Thursday night on Friday and five more on Sunday morning," Roush said. "Then myself and the five drivers were usually flying our planes in and out, too."

"There's tremendous congestion at these airports, although I think the FAA does a great job on regulating the air traffic associated with our events. Still, I didn't feel like I wanted to continue to have the responsibility for 16 airplanes, all the maintenance and pilot training."

Mourners gather for vigil at Hendrick Motorsports

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The four Hendrick family members killed in a plane crash were remembered Thursday as kind, generous people who were as passionate about giving as they were about racing.

Rick Hendrick, founder of the prestigious Hendrick Motorsports company that fields five NASCAR teams, lost his brother, son, and two nieces when a company plane crashed Sunday en route to a race in Martinsville, Va., killing all 10 people on board.

The 2,000 seats in the sanctuary at Central Church of God were filled an hour before the ceremony began, sending another 2,000 mourners into the three overflow rooms to watch the service on closed circuit television.

Spread out among the four rooms were Gov. Mike Easley, Carolina Panthers owner Jerry Richardson, NASCAR chairman Brian France and scores of drivers, crew chiefs, Hendrick employees and other members of the racing community.

With no reserved seating, the rich and famous in attendance mingled with the commoners, a Hendrick family trait in that everyone was treated equally.

"If you had a chance to meet the family, then you were like family," said Kenny Crosswhite, a pastor with Motor Racing Outreach.

Ricky Hendrick, Hendrick's 24-year-old son, was remembered as a loving brother who

Sports briefs

took the most pleasure from the relationships in his life.

"Ricky focused on real stuff — like his family, his friends, his goals and his dreams," sister Lynne Carlson said in her eulogy. "Instead of taking life too seriously, he chose to take love and giving seriously."

Police: No alcohol or drugs in Strzelczyk at time of crash

HERKIMER, N.Y. — Former NFL player Justin Strzelczyk did not have alcohol or drugs in his system when he died after leading police on a highway chase, authorities said.

State police initially believed the one-time lineman for the Pittsburgh Steelers was intoxicated, saying he threw a beer bottle out the window during the pursuit. State police investigator James Hunt said Thursday that troopers have since confirmed it was a plastic soda bottle.

Police are testing the liquid inside but it appears that Strzelczyk had been chewing tobacco and was using the bottle as a spittoon.

Strzelczyk, 36, died Sept. 30 after his pickup truck slammed into a tanker truck and exploded after a 90 mph chase along a 40-mile stretch of the New York State Thruway.

Strzelczyk, an offensive lineman, played with the Steelers for nearly a decade until the team released him in 2000.



A Hendrick Motorsports employee places flowers at a memorial site during a vigil on Wednesday at Hendrick Motorsports in Concord, N.C.

Spencer loses his Nextel ride

CORNELIUS, N.C. — Jimmy Spencer was fired by Morgan McClure Motorsports, just days after he was arrested and accused of interfering with police officers as they attempted to serve a warrant on his son.

Spencer has driven 25 races for the team this season without posting a top-10 finish. The team didn't indicate whether the firing was because of Spencer's arrest.

On Sunday night, officers went to Spencer's home to arrest James Jonathan Spencer Jr., 18, on a misdemeanor charge of injury to personal property. He is accused of pouring paint on two cars at a Cornelius home Oct. 6.

Garcia, Lara lead Volvo Masters

SOTOGRADE, Spain — Sergio Garcia shot 4-under-par 67 in windy conditions Thursday to lead the first-round lead of the Volvo Masters with fellow Span-

iard Jose Manuel Lara, who was stung by a bee early in his round.

Sluman leads Chrysler after course-record 62

PALM HARBOR, Fla. — Jeff Sluman shot a course-record 62 Thursday on the Copperhead course at Innisbrook to take a two-shot lead after the first round of the Chrysler Championship.

The previous record was a 63 by K.J. Choi in the first round in 2002, when he went on to a wire-to-wire victory.

Jonathan Kaye made a hole-in-one with a 3-iron from 222 yards on 17, then followed with a birdie in a 7-under 64. He was tied with Kirk Triplett and Kent Jones.

Vijay Singh, the No. 1 player in the world, made five birdies in a seven-hole stretch on the back nine and shot 65.

Phil Mickelson, playing for only the second time since the Ryder Cup, carded a 71.

New info to be released from Bryant case

The Associated Press

DENVER — Dozens of previously sealed court filings and transcripts of closed-door hearings in the Kobe Bryant rape case will soon be released to the public after some information is removed.

NBA briefs

District Judge Terry Ruckledge said Thursday he agreed with a media lawyer that there was no reason to keep the material sealed after prosecutors dropped the charges in September because the accused was no longer willing to participate in a trial.

No timeline was given for releasing the material, which will include documents regarding DNA testing, Bryant's statements to investigators, various arguments about evidence and expert witnesses, and transcripts from hearings on defense efforts to have certain evidence thrown out.

"Further, as noted by the news media, there remains a public as well as an academic interest in what occurred in this case as many of the issues have not been addressed in any reported decisions," Ruckledge said.

Some details will be edited out, including the woman's name, information regarding her sex life that was ruled irrelevant to the case, and medical information.

Pacers' backup G Johnson out 6-8 weeks

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana Pacers backup point guard Anthony Johnson broke his right hand in Tuesday's exhibition game against Memphis and is expected to miss 6-8 weeks.

The eight-year veteran, the primary backup to starter Jamaal Tinsley, had his hand placed in a cast on Wednesday — the same day center Jeff Foster had arthroscopic surgery to repair frayed cartilage in his right hip. He is also expected to miss 6-8 weeks.

Johnson will not need surgery.

Scott Pollard will start at center while Foster is out.

Suns' Stoudemire gets contract extension

PHOENIX — Amare Stoudemire, the 2003 NBA Rookie of the Year, had his contract extended Wednesday by the Phoenix Suns, who exercised their fourth-year option on the deal.

Stoudemire will receive \$2.6 million in the 2005-06 season, and then will become a restricted free agent. That gives the Suns the right of first refusal, meaning they could keep him by matching another team's offer.

Cavs pick up Gooden's option for '05-06

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Cavaliers picked up Drew Gooden's contract option for 2005-06, hoping the forward will take the spot vacated by departed free agent Carlos Boozer.

Gooden will make \$3.2 million this season, and the option is worth \$4.06 million.

Education Focus

In Sunday Scene, this Sunday

NHL officials meet, but lockout is not discussed

By IRA PODELL

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Negotiators for the NHL and its players' union discussed various topics in their first face-to-face meeting in over a month, but the league's labor problems were not the focus of the talks.

Ted Saskin, the senior director of the players association, was in New York on business

Tuesday and got together with Bill Daly, the NHL's chief legal officer.

The sides had not met in person since the last negotiating session on Sept. 9, one week before the NHL imposed a lockout following the expiration of the collective bargaining agreement.

"I know they were in the same place, but it was more of a conversation as opposed to a negotiation," NHL spokesman Frank Brown said Wednesday, the 42nd day of the lockout.

Daly and Saskin talked about last month's World Cup of Hockey tournament, a joint venture between the league and the players association, and other issues.

No plans were made for future meetings. The NHL regular season was due to begin Oct. 13, but games are being canceled by teams on a 45-day rolling basis.

During the last negotiating session in Toronto, the NHLPA proposed a luxury tax-based system that was rejected by the league.

WR Bordin set to make season debut for Cards

The Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Anquan Boldin went through a full workout in pads Wednesday and said there's no doubt he'll play in Sunday's game at Buffalo.

NFL briefs

"For the past couple of weeks, my goal has been to get back on any swelling or any setbacks — any swelling or any setbacks," he said. "I think I've reached that goal right now."

Boldin, last season's NFL rookie of the year, will be upgraded to probable on Thursday, coach Dennis Green said.

Green said that if Boldin is active for Sunday's game, "he'll play a significant amount."

Boldin has been sidelined since his right knee locked up during training camp on Aug. 10. He underwent arthroscopic surgery to repair torn cartilage.

Boldin missed a season at Florida State with an injured left knee, and that helped him understand what it takes to come back.

"Just be patient. I think that's the most important part — work hard and be patient," Boldin said.

"You can't come back too soon because you'll just end up getting hurt again."

Hobbled Tomlinson expects to play against Raiders

SAN DIEGO — LaDainian Tomlinson missed practice Wednesday and will probably sit out Thursday because of a strained groin, but the San Diego Chargers running back expects to play against the Oakland Raiders.

Tomlinson has been playing through the injury the past three weeks.

Two of Tomlinson's five big-

NFL injury update

Injuries to prominent NFL players, followed by team's prognosis. (See Page 32 for complete injury report provided by the league.)

Cardinals Anquan Boldin (hamstring) questionable; C Shann O'Hair (viral infection) questionable.

Raiders RB Fred Taylor (quadricusps) questionable.

gest-makers as a pro came against the Raiders in 2003. He had a career-high 243 yards in a home win in the season finale, and 187 yards in an overtime loss at Oakland on Sept. 28.

But Tomlinson hasn't rushed for more than 65 yards in the past three games.

"It was pretty bad at first, but it's getting better," said Tomlinson, who was hurt in the second half of a home win against Tennessee on Oct. 3.

Eagles RB Levens to start for injured Westbrook

PHILADELPHIA — With leading rusher Brian Westbrook likely out of Sunday's game against Baltimore with a cracked rib, 34-year-old running back Dorsey Levens will start.

Levens never thought he'd get that chance again.

"I can't say that I did, honestly," Levens said Thursday. "At my age and position, it's just not a likely scenario at this point. But it's here and it's time to go."

Levens' first start since Dec. 16, 2001, in his final season with Green Bay. Levens had two 1,000-yard seasons from 1994-2001 and is fourth on the Packers' rushing list.

He spent the 2002 season with the Eagles and had the worst season of his career last year with the Giants, averaging a career-low 2.9 yards per carry. Levens said he was ready to quit, but



LaDainian Tomlinson has missed parts of San Diego's past three games with a strained groin.

he continued to work out in case an opportunity to play arose.

Levens will face one of the top run defenses in the NFL. The Ravens are seventh in the league in run defense, allowing 103.3 yards per game and only 3.4 yards a carry.

"It's probably not the best timing in the world because it is a good defense, but the opportunity presents itself," Levens said.

Redskins rookie Taylor arrested on drunken-driving charge

ASHBURN, Va. — Washington Redskins rookie Sean Taylor was arrested Wednesday on charges of driving under the influence and refusing a breathalyzer test.

Taylor was pulled over by a Virginia state trooper at about 2:45 a.m. EDT, on Washington's Interstate 495. The officer suspected Taylor had been drinking, and Taylor flunked some field sobriety tests, according to Virginia State Police Lt. Harry Newlin.

Taylor was held for four hours in the Fairfax County Jail and released on \$5,000 bond. He is due in court Dec. 1. A first offense is punishable by up to one year in prison or a \$2,500 fine, or both.

Coach Joe Gibbs had already said it was "very unlikely" the 21-year-old safety will play Sunday against the Green Bay Packers.

"It sounds like it's serious," Gibbs said after practice Thursday. "And we'll kind of deal with it with what we think is best for the team."

49ers' first-round picks struggling

BY GREG BEACHAM

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The San Francisco 49ers insist their salvation will arrive through the draft.

The hope years of bad contracts, unlucky injuries and salary-cap woes can be erased through solid choices in April.

The trouble is, the 49ers' record in restructuring their roster isn't much more impressive than their 1-5 mark this season — particularly when it matters most.

San Francisco has made 10 first-round picks in the past 10 years. Only six are with the team, and not one has played a significant role for the 49ers this season.

Linebacker Julian Peterson and cornerback Mike Rumph are out for the year with injuries, while cornerback Ahmed Plummer, defensive end Andre Carter and left tackle Kwame Harris have been limited by less-serious injuries.

Receiver Rashawn Woods, the top pick in last April's draft, is stuck as the 49ers' No. 5 receiver, still playing catch-up after getting hurt during training camp.

And except for Peterson, who became an All-Pro linebacker last season before his contract holdout and subsequent leg injury, none of the 10 first-round picks has been as good as the 49ers hoped.

There are no classes in college that you can take to prepare you for being a first-round draft pick in the NFL," said Harris.

The 49ers love to tout the exploits of a roster stocked with players who won't play in the NFL, and the 49ers love to tout the exploits of a roster stocked with players who won't play in the NFL, and the 49ers love to tout the exploits of a roster stocked with players who won't play in the NFL.

San Francisco, which plays at Chicago on Sunday, has its worst record after six games since 1979.

Sure, there have been several stellar picks by the 49ers in recent years. In fact, you could argue that the 49ers have more success in the seventh round of the draft than the first.

Quarterbacks Tim Rattay and Ken Dorsey, starting offensive linemen Kyle Kosier and Eric Heitmann, tight end Eric Johnson and even long-snapper Brian Jennings were final-round picks.

But the team's recent picks — the ones who command the most money and scrutiny — haven't been much help in keeping the 49ers out of the cellar.

San Francisco had two total busts in the late 1990s — quarterback Jim Druckenmiller and defensive tackle Reggie McGrew — and a near-bust in receiver J.J. Stokes, who hung around for eight years on the strength of his unrealized potential.

They drafted cornerback R.W. McQuarters in 1998, but traded him to the Bears before he developed into a dependable player.

Since then, San Francisco has picked six players who are works in progress — though there's no common theme to their various struggles and setbacks.

Nobody has more work to do than Woods, quietly expected to be a major contributor to the 49ers' offense this season after being chosen with the 31st overall pick. Instead, he has struggled to adjust to the speed and precision of the pro game.

Harris' struggles have been among the most frustrating to the 49ers, who hoped the 6-foot-7 tackle would be entrenched as the offensive line's anchor by now. Last winter, they got rid of Derrick Dese to pave the way for his ascension.

But Harris has been hurt for much of the season, and he shows up on many highlight films failing to block a pass-rusher.

Packers-Redskins game doubles as a predictor for Election Day

BY JOSEPH WHITE

The Associated Press

ASHBURN, Va. — This election season, Washington Redskins coach Fred Smoot has been predicament faced by many NFL players: a Democrat's background and a Republican's income.

They turn Republican. I see it all the time," Smoot said. "It all goes back to changing your economic value."

Smoot, a black from modest means in Mississippi, has decided to choose his roots over his pocketbook. He is supporting John Kerry for president.

"When you go into a higher tax bracket, all of a sudden you don't want to vote for this candidate because you're going to raise taxes," Smoot said. "I thought about it. I'm not going to solely vote for this candidate just because he's going to be to save me a couple of dollars

and it not turn out to be the best thing for me or my country."

That, however, presents Smoot with another dilemma: For Kerry to win, the Redskins have to lose on Sunday — at least according to a bizarre statistical correlation that's been accurate for seven decades.

"We've got to win this game no doubt, but I'm hoping John Kerry can kind of reverse the curse," Smoot said. "I'm wishing him luck. This is the millennium for all trends to be broken."

Since the Redskins became the Redskins in 1933, the result of the team's final home game before the presidential election has correctly predicted the White House winner. If the Redskins win, the incumbent party wins. If they lose, the incumbent party is ousted.

It's kind of amazing," coach Joe Gibbs said. "You wouldn't think something like that would line up that many times."

Gibbs said the statistic doesn't mean anything, but he can at least pretend that it does — because he's solidly in the Bush camp.

Kerry's vice presidential candidate, John Edwards, has been quoted as saying he's rooting for the Packers. While no doubt thankful for the endorsement, Green Bay coach Mike Sherman is concerned about more rudimentary matters, such as the health of quarterback Brett Favre.

"It's going to take a lot more than Packers fans to determine the outcome of an election," Sherman said.

The locker room, particularly in Washington, isn't immune to political discussions in this politically charged year. Injured tackle Jon Stankerson recently showed up for a game wearing a Bush pin on his shirt.

Most players, however, are reluctant to go public with their views.

Challenge

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Astros exercise Biggio's option, decline Kent's

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Craig Biggio will be back with the Houston Astros next season. If Jeff Kent returns, it will be at a reduced rate.

Biggio's \$3 million option was exercised Thursday by the Astros, who declined Kent's \$9 million option and will pay the second option a \$700,000 buyout.

However, general manager Gerry Hunsicker said the team "made it clear to him that we had interest in sitting down with him and bringing him back under another contract scenario."

Eight Astros are eligible for free agency, including outfielder Carlos Beltran, likely to be pursued by the New York Yankees and other big spenders.

Biggio, who will be 39 when next season begins, is such a franchise icon that a statue of him and longtime teammate Jeff Bagwell sits outside Minute Maid Park. He was an All-Star at catcher and second base before moving to the outfield. He was the starting center fielder until moving to left to make way for Beltran.

Biggio is the franchise leader in games (2,409), hits (2,639), runs (1,603), at-bats (9,221), singles (1,790) and doubles (564).

No other current major leaguer has played as many games for his original team.

He hit .281 with a career-high 24 home runs, 47 doubles and 63

Baseball briefs

RBI's this past season. In the playoffs, Biggio hit .269 with two home runs and five RBIs.

If Houston had declined the option, Biggio would have received a \$1 million buyout.

Kent, 37 next season, agreed to an \$18.2 million, two-year contract in December 2002.

Kent hit .289 with 27 homers and 107 RBIs last season. He also set a club record by hitting in 25 straight games and started the All-Star Game in Houston.

His 278 homers are the most by a second baseman and his seven seasons with 100 RBIs ties another mark for the position. The former NL MVP has a career average of .289 with 302 homers and 1,207 RBIs in 13 seasons.

Cubs decline options on Alou, Grudzielanek

CHICAGO — Moises Alou might not be roaming left field at Wrigley Field anymore.

The Chicago Cubs declined an \$11.5 million mutual option on the outfielder Thursday and will pay him a \$2.5 million buyout.

The Cubs also declined a \$2.5 million option on second baseman Mark Grudzielanek, paying him a \$250,000 buyout instead.

Both players become eligible for free agency.

The decisions hardly come as a surprise. Alou led the team with a career-high 39 homers and 106 RBIs — the fifth time in his career he's topped 100 RBIs — and said he wanted to come back to Chicago next year. But the Cubs are looking for a younger and cheaper option than the 38-year-old as they remake their roster after a late-season collapse that cost them a spot in the playoffs.

Alou hit .283 with 76 home runs and 258 RBIs in three seasons with the Cubs. He's a career .300 hitter, with 278 homers and 1,092 RBIs, and is a four-time All-Star. He also has a World Series ring from 1997, when he hit three homers and drove in nine runs in Florida's victory over Cleveland.

Grudzielanek hit .307, but he missed most of the first two months of the season with inflammation in his right Achilles' tendon, and only played 81 games.

Burnitz, Clayton receive fond farewells from Rockies

DENVER — Dear Jeremy and Royce: Thanks a lot, you're fired.

The Colorado Rockies mailed thank-you letters this week to veterans Jeremy Burnitz and Royce Clayton, who will play elsewhere next season as the Rockies pursue a youth movement.

"They didn't have to do that. It was a nice touch," Clayton told The Denver Post.

The letters, signed by general manager Dan O'Dowd, explained to the players the team's commitment to getting younger in 2005.

Burnitz, 35, led the Rockies with 38 home runs last season. He and the team rejected a \$3 million mutual option for next season.

Clayton, 34, hit .279 with eight homers and 54 RBIs. The Rockies plan to use rookie Clint Barmes next year at Clayton's shortstop position.

Mets interview Riggelman

NEW YORK — Jim Riggelman interviewed Wednesday for the Mets' managing job, and the team hopes to hire a replacement for Art Howe next week.

Riggelman, the Dodgers' bench coach, managed San Diego for just more than two seasons and was the Chicago Cubs' manager for five seasons before being fired in 1999. He has a 486-598 record as a major league manager.

Riggelman met with Mets General Manager Omar Minaya. New York already has interviewed Yankees coach Willie Randolph, former managers Carlos Tosca and Terry Collins and Texas Rangers hitting coach Rudy Jaramillo.

Wally Backman pulled out of the managerial hunt to focus on his bid to get a job with the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Phillies interview former catcher Russell

PHILADELPHIA — John Russell, a first-round pick (13th overall) by the Philadelphia Phillies in the 1982 draft who played for them from 1984-88, interviewed for the team's managerial vacancy on Wednesday.

The Phillies, who fired Larry Bowa with two games left in the season, already have interviewed former major league managers Don Baylor, Buddy Bell, Charlie Manuel, Grady Little, and Jim Fregosi. They will interview Braves batting coach Terry Pendleton on Thursday and former Pittsburgh, Florida and Colorado manager Jim Leyland on Monday.

Elarton agrees to \$850,000, one-year deal with Indians

CLEVELAND — Scott Elarton, who pitched effectively late in the season after a slow start with Cleveland, agreed Thursday to an \$850,000, one-year contract with the Indians.

Elarton, who can earn another \$150,000 in performance bonuses, had been eligible for free agency.

The right-hander, who went 3-5 last season, signed as a free agent with the Indians on May 25 after he was released by Colorado.

He went 0-6 in eight starts with the Rockies.

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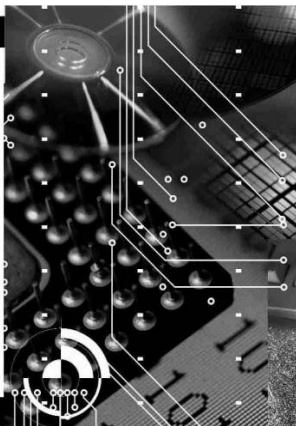
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Red Sox: Boston ends 86 years of futility

RED SOX, FROM BACK PAGE

It was Boston's sixth championship, but the first after 86 years of frustration and futility, after two world wars, the Great Depression, men on the moon, and the rise and fall of the Soviet Union.

After all that, on an eerie night when the moon went dark in a total eclipse, MVP Manny Ramirez and the Red Sox made it look easy.

They became the third straight wild-card team to win the Series, and the first club to win eight straight in a postseason.

Gone was the heartbreak of four Game 7 losses since their last title, a drought — some insist it was a curse — that really began after they sold Babe Ruth to the Yankees in 1920.

Damon's leadoff homer against

Jason Marquis and Trot Nixon's two-out, two-run double on a 3-0 pitch in the third were all that Lowe and the bullpen needed.

"They outplayed us in every category, so it ended up not being a terrific competition," Cardinals manager Tony La Russa said.

"We were ready to play. We didn't play good enough."

Having won the first-round clincher against Anaheim in relief and then winning Game 7 at Yankee Stadium, Lowe blanked the Cards on a mere three hits for seven innings.

Relievers Bronson Arroyo and Alan Embree worked the eighth and Keith Foulke finished it off for his first save.

Even before Doug Mientkiewicz caught Foulke's toss on Edgar Renteria's grounder for

the last out, the Red Sox were rushing out of the dugout. Boston players streamed in from the bullpen, and they all came together in a pulsating pile between the mound and first base.

With flashbubs popping, the hugging and jumping was electrifying. And why not? The day that would never quite come for a generation of Red Sox players and fans had finally arrived.

"We can't reverse what was a long time ago," first-year manager Terry Francona said. "This was our team this year. You can't do anything else about any other year."

Now the Red Sox get to raise the World Series banner next April 11 in the home opener at Fenway Park, with the squished Yankees in town forced to watch. No telling who will be

there — 18 Boston players are potential free agents, including Marquis and Lowe.

Lowe followed up peak performances by Curt Schilling and Martinez, capping off a year in which Boston traded away a popular shortstop Nomar Garciaparra.

"I'm so happy. I'm happy for the fans in Boston, I'm happy for Johnny Pesky, for Bill Buckner, for (Bob) Stanley and (Calvin) Schiraldi and all the great Red Sox players who can now be remembered for the great players that they were," Schilling said.

Schilling got himself traded from Arizona to Boston last November, eager to beat the Yankees and put the Red Sox in the World Series for the first time since 1918. He made it worth his while with the win earning him an extra \$15 million in a contract he negotiated himself.



Manny Ramirez

Ramirez chosen as Series MVP

BY MIKE FITZPATRICK
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Manny Ramirez will cherish this moment forever, same as every Red Sox fan from the bustle of downtown Boston to the coastal mountains of Maine.

Ramirez and the Red Sox finished a four-game sweep of St. Louis with a 3-0 victory Wednesday night, giving them their first championship since 1918. Now the shy kid who grew up in the shadow of Yankee Stadium owns a treasured spot in baseball lore — he is Boston's first World Series MVP.

"I never thought I'd get to be part of a World Series," Ramirez said. "But it's fun, let me tell you." Ramirez said. "Before we went to spring training, I told my wife I'm going to be the MVP of something. And I did it."

He batted .412 (7-for-17) with a homer and four RBIs against the Cardinals, helping the Red Sox end 86 years of pain and futility.

That was the idea when then-general manager Dan Duquette signed Ramirez to a \$160 million, eight-year deal in December 2000.

Ramirez put up prodigious power numbers during his first three seasons in Boston. But his awful defense, deplorable baserunning and hefty contract prompted the team to place him on waivers last offseason.

The front office then tried to trade him to Texas for AL MVP Alex Rodriguez. The deal fell through, and Ramirez was back in left field this season, flubbing fly balls and hitting homers over the Green Monster at Fenway Park.

He won his first AL home run crown, connecting 43 times. He also led the league in slugging percentage (.613) and finished with 130 RBIs. But his absent-minded play kept skeptics wondering if he was really the guy to finally carry Boston to glory in October.

A long lineage of great sluggers had tried and failed, from Jimmie Fox to Ted Williams to Carl Yastrzemski and Jim Rice. But it's Ramirez who became a champion, earning every penny of that enormous contract.

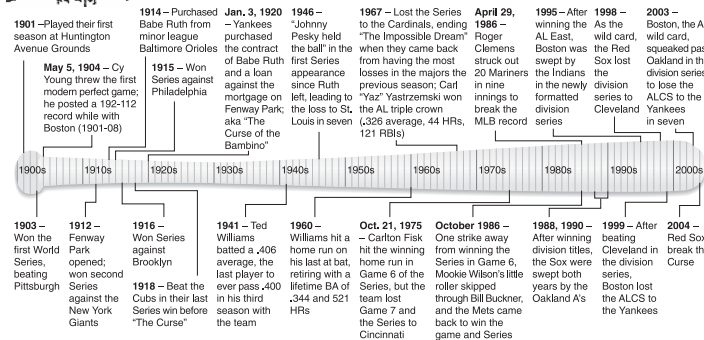
Before the game, Ramirez and Barry Bonds received the 2004 Hank Aaron Award, recognizing the outstanding offensive player in each league. Ramirez also won with Cleveland in 1999, when he had 165 RBIs.



Red Sox reverse the Curse

The Red Sox finally broke "The Curse of the Bambino," sweeping the Cardinals in four games to win the World Series. This comes after beating the Yankees in the ALCS, achieving the greatest postseason series comeback in history. Many people attribute their 86-year title drought to trading Babe Ruth to the Yankees.

Highlights and blunders of the Boston Red Sox



SOURCE: Major League Baseball

Cards: Powerful St. Louis lineup bows out quietly vs. Boston

CARDS, FROM BACK PAGE

"The odds obviously were against us," said Bill DeWitt Jr., the team's general partner and chairman of the board. "If we had won tonight it would be something to build on. But every time we hit the ball hard, it was right at somebody."

Mostly, St. Louis went quietly. The Cardinals scored one run in the last two games at home, where they had been 6-0 in the postseason, and were a woeful 4-for-28 with runners in scoring position in the Series.

The Cardinals totaled 12 runs, the fewest since the Braves had nine when they were swept by the Yankees in 1999.

The life seemed drained out of the Cardinals after the first forgettable play of the Series, pitch-

er Jeff Suppan frozen between third and home with one out in the third inning of Game 3. Instead of tying the score at 1 on a run that the Red Sox had been conceding, Suppan ran into a double play.

Starting with that at-bat, the Cardinals reached base only seven times in 54 plate appearances the rest of the Series, getting a homer, a double, three singles and two walks against a Red Sox staff that was considered far from dominant. They advanced only four runners into scoring position in Game 4.

It seemed as if he was shaping up as a slugger's series after the Red Sox's 11-9 victory in Game 1. After that, the Cardinals scored just three runs.

Cleanup hitter Scott Rolen, second in the NL with 124 RBIs, was

0-for-15 with one RBI. He finished the year in a 12-for-75 skid after coming back from a strained left calf in mid-September.

No. 5 hitter Jim Edmonds, who hit 42 homers and had a career-best 111 RBIs, was 1-for-15 with no RBIs. Sanders was 0-for-9 with five strikeouts before getting benched in favor of John Mabry in Game 4. Mabry continued that trend, going 0-for-3 with two strikeouts.

Albert Pujols and Larry Walker had their moments, but never with any support from the rest of the offense. Walker was 4-for-5 in Game 1 and homered for the Cardinals' lone run in Game 3. Pujols had three of St. Louis' five hits in Game 2 but was silent in the clincher before singling to lead off the ninth.

Pujols, Rolen and Edmonds were horrible in the club, going a combined 1-for-12. None of them got a chance for redemption in Game 4.

Pitching shouldered its share of the blame. Before Jason Marquis gutted out six innings in the 3-0 Game 4 loss, the Cardinals had gotten very little from the rotation.

Marquis was the first starter to last long enough to qualify for a victory. The three pitchers who preceded him lasted a total of 11 1/3 innings and allowed 15 runs.

Cardinals pitchers allowed at least one run in the first inning of all four games. St. Louis was dominated so completely, it never led. "It's amazing," said Game 1 loser Woody Williams. "We were talking about that on the bench: Let's get one lead and see what happens. But it never happened."

SPORTS



2003 NFL rookie of the year Boldin finally ready to make season debut for Arizona, Page 36

Boston wins World Series for first time since 1918

BY BEN WALKER
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — They are now forever a part of New England lore, names such as Pokey Reese right up there with Paul Revere and Plymouth Rock.

Because these Boston Red Sox — yes, the Boston Red Sox! — are World Series champions at long, long last. No more curse and no doubt about it.

Pedro Martinez paraded the trophy down the left-field line, hoisting it high over his head with both hands after Boston won it for the first time since 1918, beating the St. Louis Cardinals 3-0 Wednesday night for a four-game sweep.

Thousands of Red Sox fans at Busch Stadium roared. Seeing was believing, but they still couldn't believe their eyes.

"We know people who are 90 years old who have just said: 'Just one championship before I die,'" Red Sox chairman Tom Werner said.

Johnny Damon homered on the fourth pitch of the game, Derek Lowe made it stand up and the Red Sox wrapped up a Series in which they never trailed.

Ridiculed and reviled through decades of defeat, the Red Sox didn't just defeat the Cardinals. They dominated the team with the best record in baseball.

"All of our fans have waited all their lives for this night, and it's finally here. These guys did it for you, New England," Red Sox owner John Henry said.

Chants of "Thank you, Red Sox!" bounced all around the ballpark when it was over, with Boston fans as revved-up as they were relieved.

Only 10 nights earlier, the Red Sox were just three outs from getting swept by the New York Yankees in the AL Championship Series before becoming the first team in baseball postseason history to overcome a 3-0 deficit.

SEE RED SOX ON PAGE 39



Boston Red Sox catcher Jason Varitek jumps into the arms of pitcher Keith Foulke after beating the St. Louis Cardinals 3-0 to win the World Series on Wednesday in St. Louis. The Red Sox, who in the ALCS became the first team to win a best-of-seven series after trailing 3-0, won their first title since 1918.

St. Louis Cardinals center fielder Jim Edmonds, second from left, and shortstop Edgar Renteria, right, watch dejectedly during Wednesday night's loss to Boston in Game 4. The Cardinals, who won 105 games during the regular season, hit .109 and had a team ERA of 6.09 in the Series.



Ramirez becomes Boston's first Series MVP

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Long-suffering Red Sox fans can celebrate at last

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Lowe reaches high point by winning clincher

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Cards birds of another feather in Series play

BY R.B. FALLSTROM
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The St. Louis Cardinals seemingly could do no wrong during the regular season.

But that 105-win team bore no resemblance to the bunch that flopped in the World Series, losing 3-0 to Boston on Wednesday night and getting swept in four games by the Red Sox.

"I wish we would have given them a tougher fight," Reggie Sanders said. "They put the pressure on and we didn't have pressure on them at all, so it was an easy run for them."

The Cardinals had the National League's best offense and the second-best pitching staff. Not in the World Series, where they batted a feeble .190 and had a 6.09 ERA. The lineup was littered with historically bad performances at the plate, most notably by their trio of MVP candidates. And, the Cardinals' rotation, minus injured Chris Carpenter, was exposed as average.

"They outplayed us in every category," manager Tony La Russa said. "So it ended up not being a terrific competition."

The Cardinals waited 17 years to end the season with a dubious distinction: Only one team had more victories before getting swept, the 1954 Indians, who were 111-43 before losing to the New York Giants.

The wait was nearly as long for La Russa. Maybe it was even more gut-wrenching on a personal level, considering that in his last shot at the championship in 1990 his heavily favored Oakland Athletics got swept by the Cincinnati Reds.

After falling behind 3-0, ownership would have been happy with one victory. They were realistic not to expect another comeback like the Red Sox pulled off in the AL Championship Series against the Yankees.

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